

BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE IMPACT OF UNMET NEEDS  
AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES ON LEADERSHIP IN  
A CONGREGATIONAL SETTING

Edna Jafferalli

Bachelor, Brooklyn College, 2002  
Masters, Alliance Graduate School of Counseling, 2007

Mentors

Sharon Ellis Davis, M.Div., DMin., Ph.D.  
Thomas Francis, DMin.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE IMPACT OF UNMET NEEDS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES ON LEADERSHIP IN A CONGREGATIONAL SETTING**

by  
Edna Jafferalli  
United Theological Seminary, 2018

Mentor  
Sharon Ellis Davis, PhD, DMin  
Thomas Francis, DMin

The context is Wholeness International Ministries located in Brooklyn, New York. The issue in ministry is that unmet needs and unresolved issues are underlying factors that negatively influence the behaviors of Christian leaders within their congregational settings. This ministry project brings awareness and resources to leaders regarding unmet needs and unresolved issues. The hypothesis is that with increased awareness and resources for intervention, faith leaders will become better equipped to recognize the causes of negative behavior and will navigate to overcome them. The project will provide awareness workshops utilizing qualitative analysis such as pre and post surveys, observation, and interviews.

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Much appreciation and thanks go to my context associates who work diligently to ensure that this stage of my journey is completed. To Mrs. Maryse Oudkerk, my mother Patsy Sundack, my sister, Jamie Sealy, Marcel Agard and those of the household of Faith, their encouragement and support were incomparable.

Finally to my Pastor, Dr. Alfred Cockfield who provided the spring board from which I launched this project. As a result of sitting and working alongside of him in his marriage counseling class, I was inspired to examine the impact of unmet needs and unresolved issues on relationships; an inspiration subsequently confirmed by the Holy Spirit during a message based on the life of the biblical character, Abraham. The focus of that confirmation was and now is to light the way for personal introspection leading to

conviction and resulting in making the necessary adjustments to undo the negative impact unmet needs and unresolved issues has caused.

## DEDICATION

This venture is dedicated to the ‘younger me’ whose childhood experiences has shaped my adult life. Experiences that have caused me to seek professional help for my unmet needs and unresolved issues. I’m grateful for my niece Shanyia Braithwaite whose life as I watch her grow gives me the opportunity to reflect on, to revisit, and to reframe some of my childhood memories through new lenses and acquire the healing necessary for sustainability.

To my mother who has been the one constant in my life who loves me unconditionally. I want to thank you for being ‘there’ in every circumstance. Thank you for your emotional and financial support during the long journey and for just being ‘Mom’.

To my sisters Sharon and Barbara and Jennifer who exemplify love; for their belief in me even when I was losing confidence, and for cheering me on. You saw my success as yours, I am blessed because you stayed the course with me. To my nieces and nephews who fuel the fire in me to bring awareness of the effect of unmet needs and unresolved issues, especially when the process begins before adulthood; I appreciate you.

Finally to two friends who showed their belief in me with not just their encouragement and prayers but with their finances. To Grady Williams who gave me the first installment to finance this process. And to Kimberly Halley who consistently provided encouragement and finances to make this a reality; I salute you.



I didn't know my own strength...I found the light to life my way out the dark. Found all that I need here inside of me. I thought I'd never find my way, I thought I'd never lift that weight. I thought I would break. I didn't know my own strength. And I crashed down, and I tumbled but I did not crumble I got through all the pain...I was not built to break, I got to know my own strength.

— Diane Warren, *I Didn't Know My Own Strength*

## INTRODUCTION

It is often said that “everything rise and fall on leadership” which alerts us to the awesome task and responsibility of being effective leaders. Effectiveness as leaders does not come easy yet many individuals pursue leadership positions, others dream of becoming leaders while others are thrust unwillingly into leadership roles. I am a leader. While reflecting over my life I began to see the process that culminated into me becoming a leader. The journey began at the tender age of seven when the overwhelming responsibilities of taking care of three younger siblings as well as helping to maintain the home. It was done mainly through observation and self-taught of how to take care of the younger siblings and help maintain the home. I was not formally taught how to care emotionally for myself. Incapable of recognizing that the burden of manager at an early age created an emotional vacuum thereby stagnating growth in that area and being unable to accurately identify and satisfy what was lacking resulted in feeling conflicted yet powerless to identify the origin. My way of resolving those problems was either to ignore, deny they existed or to simply try to escape them.

However, this project title, *“Bringing Awareness to the Impact of Unmet Needs and Unresolved Issues on Leadership in a Congregational Setting”*, doubles as its theme. It aims at holding the light to the underlying, often-neglected challenge of unmet needs and unresolved issues that plague Christian leaderships in most congregational contexts. The biggest challenge with unmet needs and unresolved issues is that they are almost

always hidden and manifest differently within various individuals. Their misleading symptoms often present significant challenges with their diagnoses because they often find expression in diverse ways that always mask the real problem.

They show up mainly as behavioral patterns that can be viewed as tell-tale signs of underlying psycho-behavioral factors which, in some cases, could drive Christian leaders toward tendencies of overachievements followed by lulls and deeply lowered expectations. It is quite common within Christian contexts for a leader to start with great enthusiasm and passion which begins to dwindle after a relatively short period of time. Frequently, these are attributable to various 'external' factors but a closer examination would almost certainly reveal the underlying challenge of unmet needs and unresolved issues stemming from each leader's unique predispositions and/or determinisms.

Unmet needs and unresolved issues are underlying factors that negatively influence the behaviors of Christian leaders within their congregational settings. Many leaders are unaware that they are responding negatively due to the existence of unmet needs and unresolved issues. Conversely, when they become more aware of these behaviors and the possible factors that could be influencing them, they become better equipped to recognize the causes and to navigate and overcome them. Within a Christian context, the leaders with more awareness of the debilitating impact of unmet needs and unresolved issues will be equipped to address these needs in a more integrative way through awareness and utilizing the tools given them in the ministry project.

Chapter One will give an overview of the ups and downs of my personal life that lays the grounds to uncover the correlation of unmet needs and unresolved issues within a congregational setting. As such, various questions would be pressed to verify which ones

are true and define the implications of those findings. One of such questions, which also is my thesis question: “Do unmet needs and unresolved issues significantly hinder the ability of Christian leaders to attain sustainable effectiveness that is essential for congregational life?”

Chapter Two lays the biblical foundation for making us aware that the issues of today are rooted within scripture and also sheds light on the solution. This chapter looks at Abram from the Old Testament Genesis 15:1-6 and the nameless Samaritan Woman by the well in the New Testament John 4:7-18. While they are from two very distinct worlds they had one thing in common—they had unmet needs and unresolved issues. For Abram, it was the lack of an heir—childlessness and for the Samaritan, it was not clearly identified but Jesus knew what it was.

Chapter Three sheds light on one of the founding fathers who contributed meaningfully towards shaping the theology of Christianity and understanding of the fundamental components of the faith. One of such Fathers is called Saint Augustine of Hippo. The impact of his abusive father’s lifestyle and the void that it left in Augustine life may have remained as an unmet need and an unresolved issue. Augustine is not alone in the trend of significant sway of unmet needs and unresolved issues upon his biblical positions but this is quite evident in the lives of many founding fathers that have tremendously blazed the trail of biblical interpretations. Their lives, as with their works, were all impacted by the extent of the unmet needs they had to grapple with—it is quite plausible that some of their theological positions were deeply influenced by those unmet needs.

Chapter Four takes us into the theological foundations where the mandate for unmet needs is exemplified in the myriad of ways by which God reveals God's self to human-kind in the midst of our circumstances. God's self-revelation, in the midst of our unmet needs and unresolved issues, positions God as the One who serves as the ultimate "need-meeting Deity" who sees our conditions, hears our cries and meets us at our particular points of need. One of the most striking theological concepts reviewed in the process was the Black Liberation theology. At the core of this concept is the availability of redemptive power that specifically addresses the need for liberation among an oppressed people. cursory views of Feminist and Womanist theological positions were also undertaken and seen to compellingly reveal the potential biases of traditional biblical doctrines.

Chapter Five positions us for exploring the many theories that have been discoursed to help unpack the nature of unmet needs and unresolved issues. Some of them are interdisciplinary in their approach; others are more specific to psychoanalytic therapy. One of the main outcomes of reviewing various theoretical constructs in various disciplines is that it has helped broaden my understanding of how the challenges of leadership are addressed. Clearly, most of the solutions, theories and concepts offered center on transforming persons into more strategic, result-oriented leaders.

Moving forward the following chapter will offer general background and basis for the project. It is the primary narrative that sets this initiative in motion by providing foundational information about myself set within the context that gave rise to the project.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

The Christian life is essentially one of service to the kingdom of God and the community at large. The main focus of this service is the implementation of God's plan as revealed in the Bible to the end that God is recognized as Supreme and glorified in all things. Although all creation exists for the glory of God, the Fall essentially brought with it the pervasion that elevated self in the place of God; but God's plan for restoring order is by developing a people who will consistently pursue God's purposes here on earth. However, it does not take much discernment to realize that this is more theoretical than practical because the people that constitute the church globally require critical transformations to varying degrees in order to be effective representatives of Christ. The Gospels are unanimous in suggesting that God's people are the "salt of the world" implying, among other things, that they have a preservative role. This expectedly translates to a way of life that counter-balances other ways of life described as godless in the Bible. Therefore, Christians are both enabled and guided to do things in a manner that is most honoring and glorifying to God.

The processes that led to my acceptance of the message of salvation as the good news include various dynamics as I journeyed towards true morality. As with most people, one's morality is often rooted in family values and cultural inclinations, and mine was no different until I met Christ. The journey was gradual, to say the least, yet

profound. Hence, in various ways I became inclined to finding a new norm and/or meaning in my acceptance of the gospel as the good news. The initial impact of this discovery on my life was that it introduced a series of changes. It came with a strong urge for a different lifestyle, which involved much exclusion of things that previously characterized my daily life. To be sure, with each change came a deep satisfaction, yet with it came the gnawing urge to change even further. Some of those changes were precipitated through pulpit sermons, and others came from the myriad of Christian books out there; not leaving out personal readings of the Bible. With every transformative step, I often checked on my immediate context as though to gauge how I was doing. It turned out not to be a fruitful exercise because the majority of persons around did not show a similar desire for transformation as I did. This made me pause and think often whether I was overdoing anything, but I frequently became more convinced that I was not doing enough.

In my musings and sometimes, prayers, I began to develop the idea first that there must be a missing link between the desires of most people in my context and what the Bible expects from them. As this thought process developed, I began to have conversations with a few individuals who had similar frustrations with the spiritual nonchalance within my context. Those conversations eventually led to various initiatives aimed at awakening the desire for spiritual growth, and reviving deeper sense of devotion to God in the process. It was decided that I joined the discipleship directorate and work with the team to teach membership classes, discipleship programs designed to curb the spiritual decline and some preliminary Bible School classes. Shortly afterward, I started to discover that in order to get any transformative information into the psyche of the

people; some unresolved issues must be addressed. Over time, I also began to see that while the individuals that make up the congregation had unresolved challenges, the congregation itself as a unit has suffered significantly from a similar problem of its own. Accordingly, although members' personal unresolved issues were evident, these play a significant role in the manner they contributed to the church's unresolved issues as a corporate entity. Hence, the more members with serious unresolved issues, the more the church experiences difficulties from unresolved issues of its own.

My ministry interest as a teacher coupled with my training as a mental health clinician have influenced my ability to assess these problems, and my interest in being part of the solution. So, at the core, my Christian values pull me in the direction of finding solutions for these problems, and my training provides me the necessary tools for proper diagnosis and charting course of treatment for these problems. My involvement with the discipleship team and work as a therapist coupled with the decades I've spent as a member of the church puts me in a position to not only to seek change but to implement it in a way that is most beneficial to the ministry.

### **Basis for Doctor of Ministry Project**

The initial assessment of the problem indicates the following: first—my context, Wholeness International Ministries has over the years consistently failed to address conflicts, schisms, challenges and issues which can be linked to the loss of a significant portion of the membership, and erosion of sustainable growth. Second, the members of the church can be observed to struggle with their internal, personal and familial unmet needs; unresolved issues and other challenges that obstruct their ability to function



maximally as fruit-bearing members of Wholeness International Ministries. While I cannot neither claim competence for a full assessment of the complexity of these problems, nor conjure a solution that would make them better, I believe they are worthy of a Ministry Project because; perhaps, the problems will become more clearly identified which could open up the possibility of developing the framework for solutions. To my mind, if there is any hope of remedying these challenges and revitalizing the organization, it can be accomplished through a well-designed Ministry Project which I am willing to undertake.

While I feel reasonably competent to undertake this project, it cannot be construed merely as a career feat; rather I am quite convinced it is part of my calling as a worker in God's vineyard. However, it begs the questions, "do others see the problem the way I see them?", and "has there been any solutions proffered to resolve the problems?" The answer will be 'yes' in both cases. Clearly, when the church is growing, everyone is happy. There are no anxieties or pressures, rather everyone's face shimmers with gleeful joy every Sunday. When the case becomes one of no growth or empty pews, the first reaction is usually denial. This is when excuses like, "its summer, people probably took vacations", or "its winter, the roads are bad" etc. are freely doled out, but after a while, everyone sees the proverbial elephant in the room that no one wants to address. Previous initiatives towards revamping church growth and sustainability have included multiple fasting and prayer meetings, executive board meetings, workers' trainings, other non-executive meetings etc., but none of these seemed to have had any effect on the problem. Rather, those meetings often ended without any clear resolutions on the way forward. In many cases, no agreement is reached even on what to pray about; and of course, we only

agree on the fact that the devil is our problem, which has become quite the cliché. There is no denying that the devil is our problem but likewise there is no denying that our actions and/or inactions either enable or prevent him.

The unsettling nature of these challenges clearly calls for a well-guided Ministry Project; and in my case, it is well-aligned with my ministry interests because of my commitment to finding their roots as well as to help develop the right solutions to mitigate negative outcomes. My academic background in psychoanalysis, coupled with my theological foundation from United Theological Seminary, provides the scholarly basis for the Project. My interest in ministry has incrementally driven my quest for knowledge to better understand my place as one of the many workers in God's vineyard. Having attended various conferences and trainings, read various Christian literatures and heard many sermons, my passion for ministry services has become very profound. I have constantly pursued personal development spiritually with a keen eye on bringing transformative information to everyone in my sphere of influence for their betterment and improvement. Having done this for years, I have increasingly become more aware that the limitations Christians often experience can be lifted provided some weighty matters in their pasts can be resolved. I have also been privileged to experiment on this notion both professionally and with some of my peers.

In either case, I sense that I have discovered far-reaching results that have helped many individuals move past inhibitions that were lodged in their psyche to become freer and more amenable to change. Gradually, I began to observe a new trend come into focus but instead of individuals, it had to do with groups, especially families. Dealing with some individuals and couples began to open up the possibility that their unresolved

challenges had a group dynamic to it, which I thought was worth exploring. Initially, it was quite daunting because it involved multiple persons which escalated the task of convincing them of the need for any appearance of psychoanalysis. But eventually, it paid off because we were able to undergo the process and effectively find resolutions to mentally-debilitating problems as a group and not merely individuals.

As I pondered the challenges of the ministry context, it became quite clear that the main reason all the traditional solutions to church growth and sustainability have failed to yield optimum results was not due to poor implementation, rather, it was due to unresolved issues and unmet needs. My ministry context has chronically avoided issues: the leadership has frequently kept sealed lips when shocking incidences occur and resolutely refused to respond to those bold enough to demand answers. Of course, many have, as a result stormed out of the church ending their membership, while many others that remain tend to subdue their discontentment while settling a notion of peace. After experiencing this for nearly three decades, it has evolved into a chronic problem that demands a solution and I believe this Ministry Project would ultimately be a step in the right direction.

### **Context Review and Analysis**

The context of this Ministry is Wholeness International Ministries located in Brooklyn NY. The church currently has about 300 members predominantly of West Indian descent. Since West Indians are multiracial, it is important to mention that Wholeness International Ministries consists only of Western Indians of African descent, and are properly referred to as African-Americans for all intents and purposes. A

significant percentage of the members are senior citizens; these are mainly among the first generation members that have remained. Many of the other first generation members have relocated, joined another church or died. The age distribution of the membership is 35% seniors, 40% middle-aged and 25% consists of young adults, teenagers children and infants. Clearly the ratio of women to men is approximately 5:1. Most of the members are set in families. The family settings are mostly diverse, some quite complex, while others are extended. Some of the families are multigenerational ranging from two generations to four generations. It would seem that everyone is connected to a family among the membership, only a very infinitesimal number have no familial affiliations among the membership.

The complex nature of the membership has its advantages and of course, challenges. The main advantage is that members generally remain within the church and this sustains the church life and traditions in a manner that transcends weekly meetings at the church. It also means that family growth translates immediately to church growth because children born into those families grow up to become potential members of the church when they are of age and having attended the membership class. In addition, some of the problems and challenges that rise among membership can potentially be resolved within the family networks where applicable making pastoring relatively less challenging. On the other hand, the disadvantages are quite obvious. Families often carry their unresolved issues with them and in some cases transfer them to the various aspects of church life. In addition, member administration becomes quite daunting because when a decision made is not viewed favorably by one member, chances are the entire families become negatively disposed to such decisions and quite literally create administrative

nightmares for the church. In another vein, social conflicts often arise between families and sometimes they run so deep that they become almost completely irresolvable. The longer some of these unresolved issues last, the more difficult to get to the roots and find real resolutions for them. This often creates serious challenges to church membership.

Most of the adult members of Wholeness International Ministries are educated to tertiary levels. The women are clearly more educated than the men and tend to hold better jobs as well. One of the reasons for this trend is possibly the larger population of women in the church. This properly fits into the demographical fact that more African American women are better educated and more gainfully employed than their male counterparts<sup>1</sup>. Probably contrary to expectations, the level of education of Wholeness International Ministries members are mostly for economic betterment but little impact on their social standings. The norm whereby more education translates to more social exposure and possibly pseudo-aristocracy is not common among the church membership. Rather, a deep devotion to the extended families takes precedence over the desires for the finer things of life.

### **Needs of the Context**

Having existed for nearly six decades, Wholeness International Ministries needs a complete overhaul of her approach to resolving issues and meeting the needs of the church. In addition, the organization needs leadership change (not necessarily change of persons in leadership) that would find the will and courage to take on the multifaceted

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<sup>1</sup> "Black Gender Gap in Education: Historical Trends and Racial Comparisons," *Journalist's Resource*, n.d., accessed December 1, 2015, <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/race-society/black-gender-gap-college>.

challenges of the church by developing a solution robust enough to arrest the psychological strain on the ministry and foster sustainable growth in the ministry. Psychological strain because the main need of the church is a change of thinking. The psychological framework of the ministry is currently very difficult and challenging to classify into any particular category. Through various individual discussions, the main question on the lips of most members has been, “what is going on?” While many would prefer to leave “our dear Pastor” alone, they discretely wonder what he is doing about the various problems facing the church, or whether he is even aware of those problems. In fairness, my conversations with him as one of the leaders at Wholeness International Ministries revealed to me that he is aware of the problems but is still trying to figure what would be the right move to make and when to make those moves. While the patience of many leaders are running out, I hold a different view regarding the types of solutions that can give us a fair shot at resolving the tensions without causing even more emotional damage. My view is to address the unmet needs and unresolved issues as a lasting solution to all our leadership challenges.

### **The Pastor**

The Pastor of Wholeness International Ministries is one of the most gentlemanly individuals out there. His meek and quiet demeanor certainly reminds one about the beatitudes of Jesus where He promises that the meek would inherit the world. In addition to this, he is very soft spoken yet his voice is strong enough, loud enough when he inflects to herald biblical messages at multiple Sunday services. Having served for more than 37 years, his tenure has witnessed the highest achievements of the ministry as he

stirred the church along the path of what he firmly believes to be the vision of the church. Pastor is a devoted father; not only to his immediate family but there are many among the church membership who defer to him as a father and to those who are either in his age-bracket or even older, they still honor him as a wise, stable leader.

Pastor's ministry has evolved over the years despite embodying consistency in nearly all of the old traditions of the church including those that many contemporaries have altogether abandoned. One great quality about him is the fact that once he is convinced about something, he grabs on quite tenaciously and seldom loses grip. He can be regarded as a very reliable, affable and amiable man of God. He constantly speaks of meeting God when his work here is done and looks forward to hearing, "Well done, though good and faithful servant". Nothing is more profound to him than that statement. Finally, one of the most notable things about him is his uncanny way of staying calm in the midst of the wildest of storms. He neither likes nor appreciates conflicts.

Pastor's rise to his current position as the leader of Wholeness International Ministries is nothing short of divine providence. When the late founder died, there were at least five contenders to replace him. One of the least contenders was the current Pastor especially because of how averse he was to conflict especially in a church setting. While others had no problems with advancing their interests in the open position with all manner of political jostling, he preferred to stay out of the fray. At this time, he chose to take a leave of absence from the church until the whole ruckus died down. He received various opportunities for the position of Assistant Pastor at some other churches but refused. Therefore, another Pastor became pastor in the midst of all the chaos but he did not last. After a few months it became unbearable for him and he decided to quit the

position and proceed to open a new church for himself and his supporters. In a nutshell, the church split into five groups and only a fifth of the membership remained by the time the Pastor was unanimously invited to become the leader of the congregation.

By the time the Pastor took the mantle of office, the church was in a very bad shape. The former pastor and the defectors had left the books in a huge mess and the building was in a deplorable state of disrepair. With the few that remained, he started to gradually find ways to address the debt and even worked with his hands to help maintain the building using his skills as a trained mechanical engineer by profession. They worked hard and made sacrifices and with lots of heartfelt prayer, the church was resuscitated back to life. The numbers kept growing and growing with more people becoming converts and getting baptized at Sunday services until such a time that the church was no longer in the red and then he could afford to resign his secular job to concentrate fully on leading the church.

The growth phase of the church can be described as explosive. The church blossomed; the message was vibrant and full of energy. Members loved and followed their pastor by sharing his enthusiasm for evangelism and global discipleship. Pastor had a lot of young men that looked up to him; they wanted to become ministers like him and he helped develop their gifts by giving them ministry opportunities. Some of them were very good ministers and when the time was right, the church decided to expand into other areas of New York and beyond. It was easy to entrust these initiatives to the shadow ministers that trained under him. As earlier identified, some of these men had deep family ties among the church membership who were naturally sympathetic to them regardless of how ignoble the stances they espoused. Soon it was clear some of these pastors became



insubordinate to the ministry and willfully chose to breakout on their own. This brought some of the most painful times at the church. The ministers broke away and took with them their supporters, and members who had family ties with them.

In his usual calm demeanor, Pastor did not address this problem with the general church membership. People had questions and wanted to know what happened. The church leadership did not issue any official statement on the breakaways but quietly let them go. In the absence of a leadership position of the matter, naturally, the rumor mill went to work—with all kinds of speculations spawning freely and some even devolved into conspiracy theories. Despite all these, nothing came forth publicly from the leadership. It seemed like it was okay for people to speculate freely based on the illusive notion that soon enough they would find new things to talk about. On a very public and general level, all the issues seemed to be swept under the carpet and this kept piling until it has now become very difficult to address them.

### **The Church**

While the leadership tried the best they could to manage the affairs of the church during those very turbulent times, church life continued as usual. Services went on as always, families milled in and out of the church and the various departments worked tirelessly to maintain their schedules. However, as with most churches, some of the disgruntled could not continue with the church and decided to move to other churches. One of the most common excuses they gave was the idea that they were not being challenged enough or were not being fed by the general dynamic of the church. To the keen listener, this is a surface answer to a rather deeper problem. For most, their

dissatisfaction has very different roots from the reasons they offered. If one could look beneath the surface, what comes to light would often be characterized with years of dissatisfaction with various things. For some, this dissatisfaction is directed at Pastor and/or the leadership while others stem from interpersonal or familial conflicts among members.

Social problems are common to any gathering of human beings. The success of such human endeavors therefore rise and fall on their ability to minimize those social conflicts while maximizing the core strengths of the organizations. In the Old Testament, the historical account of God's chosen people is replete with many unresolved conflicts, and discordant issues. The New Testament believers were no different with their fair share of human problems resulting in conflicts, unmet needs and unresolved tensions. One only needs to look at the many denominations and church traditions to see that while Christians claim to serve the same Lord, they hold marked differences in their approach towards this service. Even some of those whose beliefs or traditions are essentially the same find reasons to remain apart from each other mainly because of conflicts that could not be resolved. It stands to reason therefore to presume that the root cause of unmet needs and unresolved issues, particularly among church memberships, is a universal problem. As with all universal problems, the more pronounced the problem, the less the leaders are able to navigate the unmet needs and unresolved issues.

The unmet needs and unresolved issues at Wholeness International Ministries have clearly denied the church the ability to realize its full potentials. Other strong churches that started around the same time or later have grown to become mega-churches in the area (not necessarily mega in their transformative impact) but at least they have

been able to navigate the social problems, managed their conflicts, and dealt with unmet needs and unresolved issues enough to make room for longer growth periods. As a result, they have been very effective in advancing their agendas and impacting Brooklyn in diverse ways. Unlike them however, Wholeness International Ministries has a unique message that is directed predominantly at the wellbeing of people's souls rather than emphasizing their earthly wellbeing. Unfortunately, the debilitating lack of resolutions for various internal tensions has kept the church going around in circles for a long time. I believe the key to reaching our full potential lies in our ability to recognize these unmet needs and unresolved issues address them and move past them with the satisfaction that they have at least all been addressed.

The complexity of the challenges at Wholeness International Ministries doubles when the personal unmet needs and unresolved issues of members are factored in. Nearly all of the first generation members of the church are first generation migrants to the United States of America. Many came to the US for the promise of financial and social stability; and with such often come unrealistic expectations. As many would testify, their experience when confronted with the reality of living in America is a complete departure from their dreams and expectations. Many had to work multiple jobs just to keep a roof over their heads and keep the heat on in the winter. Often, this exacerbated by tumultuous marriages and children grappling with the constantly evolving culture. For most, church attendance was one of the ways of having true community with a people who understood their struggles. They came to church faithfully because they loved the Lord but coupled with the benefit of mingling with friends and family some of whom have ties that spans

multiple generations. Therefore, when expectations are broken in church, the hurts are deeply felt and failure to adequately address these issues only makes things worse.

Any meaningful and effective solution to the challenges at Wholeness

International Ministries must of necessity include a transformative approach aimed at individual members as the first step towards corporate change. To solve the multifaceted challenges, it must begin with a good diagnosis of various components in order to expose how they connect to our inability to make meaningful progress. An effective solution to any challenge begins with the critical step of adequately defining that challenge and developing a hypothetical framework of the possible remedies. While the main focus is to develop a solution to the perceived challenges of the ministry context, some theories may emerge in the process of defining the problems that could immediately be developed or reserved for future projects. However, this project will seek to make connections between the external and the internal in order to uncover the true nature of the challenges at Wholeness International Ministries.

### **My Connection**

Over the entire spectrum of my life are pivotal points that have shaped me for life and ministry. Right from a young age, my experiences immediately began to set the course of my life for such brokenness that it could only take the Lord Jesus to put me back together for His purposes. I remember growing up and yearning for my father. He had left home when I was five years or thereabout but each time I heard about him I longed for him to be more present in my life but unfortunately he was seldom there. By the time I became a preteen, I had started to resent him, and I became quite angry. I felt

like he left a void in my life and the feeling was awfully painful. When I was turning fourteen, my mom came back from the market and announced that she saw my father and reminded him it was my birthday in a few days. He responded by saying that he would come and bring me a present. This magically dissipated my resentment and anger, and I found myself full of glee at the prospect of receiving a birthday present from my father. Unfortunately my joy was short lived because three days before my birthday we received the sad news that my dad had passed away of a massive heart attack.

I must have slumped into shock, anger and depression. My hopes were shattered with such finality and irreparability that I became severely despondent. Not only was any plans for my birthday canceled, I lost my father who I barely knew and never got to receive the present he had promised. I looked for someone to blame and settled on blaming him for leaving me. I blamed him for not caring, for not being there and even for dying when I needed him the most.

What followed was a barrage of gnawing questions. I wanted to know why everything happened the way it did. During some of our down times, I would chip in one question or another to my mom and she would often give an answer that made me ask even more questions to which she would have no replies. Later, I moved from disbelief to acceptance of my new reality—I was going to grow up without my biological father. Yet, I still had a longing for any semblance of fatherhood, so I deferred to my older brother as my father figure. Soon enough, the relationship was interrupted by his migration to the United States. It brought back the trauma of losing my father all over again. Then I went into a relationship as a young lady, in love with what seemed to be the most handsome young man I had ever seen. He meant everything to me and all I wanted to do was give

him my all and also keep him to myself because I was determined not to lose him like my father and my elder brother. I met him at the same time that I had committed my life to the Lord and five years later we were married. Like most marriages, the honeymoon stage was blissful; a slice of heaven to say the least. But soon things took a turn for the worst as I became paranoid when he would leave home to go anyplace outside of work. One day, I came home and he was gone like my father—*déjà vu*! Alas! I was reliving my father's disappearance again, only this time, it is so much worse.

My husband left but instead of moaning this loss endlessly, I was blessed to be exposed to God's Word rather providentially. I began to see light in the Word of God and I was drawn towards this light with such compulsion that can only be described as divine. The Lord comforted me, strengthened me and gave me the ministry of comforting others while reconciling many to Godself. My faith grew stronger in the Lord as I encountered God in various passages of Scripture. Coupled with my training as a mental health clinician, I could see that this was the resolution I was looking for. My discovery of Christ as the answer to all my life's questions became the most satisfying reality of my life. I started to understand and know what it meant to be overflowing with joy, and to drink from the rivers of eternal life. I understood what Jesus spoke about in John 4, when he told the Woman by the Well that the water He gives is a wellspring of everlasting life (my emphasis). It dawned on me that God was the Father I had been longing for; my earthly father was merely symbolic of the real deal. This became my new norm. The satisfaction of relating to God as my Father also made me more determined to help others through a new twofold passion: the first was to deepen my relationship with God and the

other was to share this message with such enthusiasm that anyone hearing me would become deeply passionate about knowing Christ in such a practical way.

On the other hand, my training as a clinician gave me the exposure to helping people with minor to mild mental issues. These are essentially normal, everyday people who carry on thinking everything was okay with them. Time and again, I increasingly became convinced that the psychological blockages most people exhibit are caused by their unmet needs and unresolved issues. The endless conflicts in many marriages and other relationships are rooted in deeply embedded unmet needs and unresolved issues. The social tensions and cultural malfunctions are all traceable to deep-seated problems that patients have become so accustomed to that it has become a dominant part of their subconscious.

Most of these experiences took place in my life as a member of Wholeness International Ministries. My relationship with the Lord was nurtured in this environment and it was such an amazing thing. Despite various experiences of my Pastor as a true representative of Christ and as a mere mortal, I had come to my own and could stand up for myself with the assurance of faith that Christ in me is the hope of glory. Yet, I have also observed a completely unnoticed trend in the church which seemed innocent enough at the outset but eventually began to bear really ugly fruits. The trend was the sweeping of issues under the cosmic carpet without really trying to find helpful resolutions. Under the pretext of spirituality, our failures were not met with honest and critical appraisals neither were any of the distasteful outcomes fully addressed among members. Hence, gradually we began to witness the slow process of tearing down what we had so painstakingly built over the years. We have tried management trainings, self-help

workshops, and many church-growth fads that came along the way. None of them has produced any meaningful result; it was like trying to put new wine into old wineskins. All these were genuine efforts that were indicative of two things: the first was that something was wrong, and the second was that we were willing to do something about it.

### **Learning Expectations**

As I focus this ministry project on the rather abstract problem of unmet needs and unresolved issues, it does present a limitless opportunity to learn the nature of a social problem in Christian-congregational setting. Many studies exist on human behavior in communities, groups and organizations with specific emphases on causes and effects of unresolved conflicts. Such studies have produced a wealth of knowledge in scholarly observations of the types of human behavior in various settings that propagate unresolved issues. While these studies provide a reasonably strong basis for this ministry study, they are lacking in examining the role of Christian spirituality as it relates to unmet needs and unresolved issues with respect to congregational life. Therefore, the main learning point of this ministry project would include the understanding that can be gained when Christian fellowships become hindered by unmet needs and unresolved issues on a corporate level.

In another vain, the ministry project would provide an ample opportunity to rigorously learn more about my context. The entire process would help peel back the proverbial masks in order to reveal the real individuals inside. It would harness the true feelings of the people by limiting pretensions and encouraging frankness of speech and feelings. The general belief of my context is that the members truly love their Pastor; but



it is hoped that data gathered would either prove or debunk this popular notion. I believe it would also unveil how the membership feels about the future direction of the ministry by attempting to gauge whether or not they believe the church would thrive again or not. Possibly the most important discovery would be to confirm that a number of unmet needs and unresolved issues are the bane of Wholeness International Ministries.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of the life of Christ on my life has set me on a journey toward accomplishing tasks that would potentially enhance the Church context where Christ has planted me. Undoubtedly, the course of my whole life have been charted to arrive at this rather turbulent but thrilling point that has me investigating the impact of unmet needs and unresolved issues in the congregational setting of a church. The ups and downs of my life seemed to be the grounds of preparation for this ministry study that should take me down the path to uncovering the correlation of unmet needs and unresolved issues with church stagnation. As such, various questions would be pressed to verify which ones are true and define the implications of those findings. One of such questions, which is also my thesis question is: “Do unmet needs and unresolved issues significantly hinder the ability of Christian leaders to attain sustainable effectiveness that is essential for congregational life?”

The process of this ministry study will include the development of a procedural strategy for gathering data which will be used to extrapolate outcomes that either affirm or negate the thesis question. Guidelines provided by my mentor would be used to perform the required tasks that would yield the useful data for processing. This would be

used to test my Ministry Project's general hypothesis: "Do unmet needs and unresolved issues significantly hinder the ability of Christian leaders to attain sustainable effectiveness that is essential for congregational life?" If the study proves to be true then the hypothesis is confirmed but if it fails, then other factors may be responsible for the identified problem.

Looking ahead to the next chapter, it will introduce the biblical foundations of this project in which we wrestle with scripture passages from the Old and New Testaments. The chief Old Testament passage discussed is Gen. 15:1-6 which is essentially a review of Abram's encounter with Yahweh. The New Testament passage is from John 4:7-18 which representing a discourse of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Life is full of unresolved issues and dilemmas. Likewise, the Bible provides ample examples of such unresolved issues and the argument can be made that the objective of the Bible is aimed at addressing the principal unresolved issue confronting humankind of all generations—namely, the eternity of the human soul. Given the status of the Bible as the Word of God, it stands to reason to establish foundational scriptural passages for this ministry project. To this end Gen.15:1-6 from the Old Testament and John 4:7-18 from the New Testament have been selected. The discourse would begin with a brief introduction of the textual relevance to the project objectives which will be followed by a more detailed exegetical analysis of the texts first with Gen.15:1-6 and subsequently John 4:7-18.

The concluding section will include a synthesis of the exegetical discussions with the ministry project objectives in order to justify their selection as foundational passages for the project and show the relevance of these passages to the thesis statement—namely—the reality of unresolved issues within congregational contexts is capable of hindering the capacity to attain spiritual maturity and reach full potentials as a congregation. In other words, unresolved issues exist and they are mainly responsible for the anemic fruitfulness of many congregations.

In Gen.15:1-6, the text describes Abram right in the middle of his dealings with Yahweh. The situation preceding this passage was that Abram had been instructed by Yahweh to depart from his homeland and travel eastward toward a place that Yahweh would show him. Abram, his wife, nephew and other members of his household embarked on this trip out to the unknown location. Meanwhile, Abram and Sarai had no offspring and this was a major life-challenge for them. As the relationship between Yahweh and Abram evolved, Yahweh had promised not only to give Abram an offspring but to multiply their progeny beyond countable numbers. At the point where this passage picks up in Gen. 15:1-6, there was an exchange between Yahweh and Abram. And during the course of this conversation, Yahweh reinforced the great promises but Abram replied with a complaint indicating his discontentment with the childless situation between Sarai and himself. This expression of discontentment by Abram to Yahweh fully describes the unresolved issue that Abram and Sarai had grappled with from the moment they chose to obey Yahweh.

Textual analysis will follow exegetical methods that would seek to unpack the passage with as much detail required for a rigorous exploration of the unresolved issues thereby identified. The procedure will begin with a detailed outline of Gen. 15:1-6 followed by a background analysis to detect key data about the authorship and source of the text i.e. the book of Genesis. Also, dates, circumstances, target audience, purposes and other contextual elements will be discussed including the possibility of redactions where applicable. This will be followed by further details concerning the actual contents of the passage including the discussion of keywords and their possible functions. The genres, type of narrative and literary structure will be identified and the passage will also

be briefly reviewed for textual criticisms<sup>1</sup>. Following these would be the contextual assessments which include passage context within larger text, within the biblical book and eventually the canonical context. Additionally, textual comparisons will be reviewed to locate other places with similar context or occurrences with the aim of uncovering elements of progressive revelation if any and context within similar books if any.

The narrative of John 4:4-26 is often generally referred to as ‘The Samaritan Woman’ for a number of reasons. Primarily, it stands out in scripture as one that focuses on addressing multilayer issues in the life of a woman that did not have much going for her in terms of reputation. Then the approach she takes in this striking encounter with Jesus stand out in its portrayal of what can be expected from most individuals seeking satisfaction in finite things and places. To crown it all, Jesus patiently follows her conversational maneuvers with the patience of an expert psychologist and finally wraps up the conversation with a rare explicit revelation that He was the Messiah.

The situation was that Jesus and the disciples were making their way from Judea to Galilee and chose to pass through Samaria—a route that is abhorrent to the Jews. When they arrived at Sychar, they were hungry and parched and while the disciples went into a nearby village to purchase food, Jesus went to sit by Jacob’s well<sup>2</sup>. Shortly afterwards, a Samaritan woman showed up to fetch water and it was about midday. Then Jesus engaged her in a conversation by asking her for some water to drink. She was stunned by the request seeing that Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans and freely

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*, New edition. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983).

expressed her astonishment to Jesus. The conversation takes the first twist when Jesus responded that if she knows who He was, she would be the one asking for a drink of water.

Still unsure where the conversation was going, she reminded Him that He had nothing to fetch water with. Then the conversation takes a second twist—Jesus tells her that the water is not from the well but that anyone who drinks it would never thirst again. She sees the opportunity here and indicates her interest in this extraordinary water Jesus was offering.

Then the conversation takes a third twist as Jesus moves away from the ‘water conversation’ to her personal life when He told her to go and bring her husband. She replies that she did not have one and Jesus confirmed to her that she was telling the truth adding that she has been with four husbands and the man she was currently shacking up with was not her husband. This jolted her quite a bit but she managed to introduce the fourth twist in the conversation. Figuring that this stranger possessed supernatural powers and has touched on her sore topic, she stirs the conversation away to a new subject that was both contentious and relatable to a ‘prophet’. She decides to talk about worship and Jesus went with her and solved the centuries-old dilemma between Jews and Samaritans about who truly worships God<sup>3</sup>.

He provided a radical solution to the worship problem that neither gave credence to the Samaritan views nor the Jewish traditions. Then she questions him about the

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<sup>3</sup> Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition: Revised and Updated*, 3rd Anniv ed. edition. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012).

anticipated Messiah to which he answered without any dark speeches, that He in fact was the Christ, and she believed it to her soul's satisfaction.

The exegetical layout of John 4:7-18 will follow the pattern established earlier for Gen.15:1-6 by address the textual analysis, resolving the textual questions and unpacking the contextual elements of the passage. The subsequent discussions will mainly aim at establishing observations from the exegeses that connect the concepts of the ministry projects with the passages discussed. And this will eventually culminate in a conclusion that sums up the outcomes of the exegetical exercise.

### **Old Testament Passage (Gen. 15:1-6)**

“1. After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; and your reward shall be very great.” 2. But Abram said, “O LORD GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3. And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” 4. But the word of the LORD came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.” 5. He brought him outside and said, “Look toward the heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” 6. And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Society of Biblical Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition: Fully Revised & Updated*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, Revised and Updated ed. edition (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperOne, 2006).

### Analysis

The book of Genesis is canonically the first of the sixty-six books of the Holy Bible. Held by many religious traditions to be the book of beginnings, it provides the account of the origins of all creation as the work of the one and only deity called God<sup>5</sup>. It is probably one of the most controversial books of the Bible in modern times because advances in technology suggests an entirely different, albeit compelling, account of the universe' origins<sup>6</sup>. Yet, the point of Genesis may not necessarily be for scientific inquiry but an introduction to the One who though not having a beginning, began all things—a troubling concept for non-believers but most satisfying for those who approach God through faith.

However, the creation narrative is all but a comparatively small section of Genesis because it covers other critical matters including life on earth, humans, sin, grace, the flood the patriarchs, slavery and the birth of the nation of Israel. Within these narratives is the account of Abram, the first of the patriarchs and who is of main interest to this discourse. This record of Yahweh's interactions with Ahram would form the foundational basis for three of the most prominent religious movements in the world, namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. While the authorship of Genesis remains widely debated among scholars most have settled for one of two main choices. More traditionally, Moses is believed by many to have written Genesis but higher critics have credited the works to non-Mosaic authors and have developed other 'working theories' or

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<sup>5</sup> Newsom, Ringe, and Lapsley, *Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition*.

<sup>6</sup> *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd edition. (Leicester, England ; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).



‘traditions’ for the compilation of the works contained in Genesis.<sup>7</sup> “It is extremely difficult to obtain independent evidence as to the historicity of Genesis, since many of the narratives have not parallel in non-biblical literature”<sup>8</sup>. For the purposes of this project however, which does not include the critical review of authorship, the traditional Mosaic authorship will be presumed.

The narratives of Genesis were written by Moses for the preservation of the records of God’s dealings with Israel and humankind primarily for the descendants of Abraham and by extension for all the families of the world according to the Abrahamic covenant<sup>9</sup>. The circumstances surrounding the passage was that Abram and his wife Sarai living in Haran and shortly after the death of his father Terah, heard Yahweh commanding him to depart Haran for a new land with the added promises of being made into a great nation bestowed with bountiful and immeasurable blessings and they obeyed that command. As they journeyed, Yahweh’s faithfulness was evidenced in the numerous blessings that Abram’s household received but at this point, Abram was still without an offspring. The next opportunity he gets to have a conversation with Yahweh, he makes point of stating exactly how little the blessings meant to them without an heir to succeed him.

Genesis 15:1-6 falls within the prose historical narrative that chronicles the lives of the main patriarchs in the Hebrew Bible therefore it takes on the historical-

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<sup>7</sup> John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Second Edition*, 2 edition (Fortress Press, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd edition (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Patte, José Severino Croatto, and Teresa Okure, *Global Bible Commentary* (Abingdon Press, 2004).

biographical structure but with a slant towards their interactions with Yahweh as the patriarchs evolve into the nation of Israel according to the Abrahamic covenant. The passage also covers a conversation between Yahweh and Abram with some metaphoric and idiomatic literary devices. When Yahweh said three things to Abram in v.1 “do not be afraid... I am your shield... your reward will be very great...”<sup>10</sup> these were literary images used to intensify the need for reassurance, protection and compensation. Using the imagery of a shield, Yahweh was reassuring Abram that there is nothing to be afraid of because Yahweh would give him full range of protection. Throughout the conversation Yahweh would use other imagery to intensify the vow to both protect and prosper Abram using words like the heavens, the stars and descendants to firm up Abram’s reassurance that he really had nothing to worry about.

Starting with Yahweh’s opening statement as soon as the vision started in v.1, it would appear that He was addressing Abram’s problem even before he gave voice to it. Consequently, the ‘shield’ imagery was aimed at allaying any internal tensions that might have made Abram somewhat edgy. The answer to fear and uncertainty is reassurance, therefore the imagery of the ‘shield’ took aim at Abram’s sense of insecurity that is rooted in the concern that he might end up without an offspring after all. Other imageries used by Yahweh in the course of the conversation were ‘sky’, ‘stars’ and ‘descendant’<sup>11</sup>.

The starry night of the Negev must have been a stunning vista—it must have been spotlessly clear without any lurking clouds but endless stretch of dark celestial vastness

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<sup>10</sup> Society of Biblical Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition: Fully Revised & Updated*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, Rev Upd edition. (San Francisco, CA.: HarperOne, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Fidler, “Genesis Xv: Sequence and Unity,” *Vetus testamentum* 57, no. 2 (2007): 162–180.

punctuated only by the bedazzling stars that gleamed just enough light to assert their radiance. One look at this starry night and the innumerability of the stars definitely made a lasting impression on Abram because the infinite Creator just promised to make him a father of generations comparable only to uncountable stars of the clear Negev night.

The context of Gen. 15:1-6 in the larger surrounding text is nothing short of a marvel. Having read this passage over and over, I have become convinced that if it were not present in the multi-chapter narrative of the dealings between Yahweh and Abram (later Abraham), the worth of the narrative will become significantly diminished. This is arguably the epicenter of everything that is valuable in the Abrahamic narrative because while the conversation seemed to be addressing a felt-need in Abram's life, it was actually aimed at the deeper recesses of his heart—the seat of his personality.

Mainly, Abram's mind might have been preoccupied with having a biological offspring to succeed him but little did he realize that this unresolved issue had merged itself with the core of his being such that, in a manner of speaking, it had become his identity. To be sure, there are many critical aspects of the entire Abrahamic narrative that weigh heavily when it comes to the overall value of the narrative itself. Parts like when Sarai finally became pregnant at a biologically impossible age, or when Yahweh asked him to sacrifice Isaac and many others like that. As remarkable as these are, the narrative of Gen.15:1-6 is the foundation on which they were forged and here is why.

Prior to Yahweh's instruction to leave Haran and head towards the Negev, Abram and Sarai's identity was one of childlessness. There was zero hope of having any children between them; possibly, they might consider a few options in future but the die was cast—Sarai was barren. Yahweh shows up and promises descendants and many

blessings. Years later, all of Yahweh's promises came true except one—they still had no children. Now getting to Gen.15:1-6, Yahweh aims at the problem and Abram bites by addressing the matter head on and literally blaming Yahweh for not doing anything about his situation (v. 3a “And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring...”)<sup>12</sup> and Yahweh responds with breathtaking imagery that infinitely surpasses his miniscule longing for one child and at this point the unresolved issue that had so merged with his personality was severed and Abram became free to see for the very first time what Yahweh had been saying all along.

Now that unbelief was out of the way, v.6 says, “And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.” This is essentially comparable to the Christian doctrine of the New Birth; Abram received the gift of faith and was now ready to move to the next level to a covenantal relationship that would endure for all ages. The strongest testament to the veracity of this claim is what happened next after righteousness was established. Abram immediately receives instructions on the covenantal animal sacrifices to make in order to seal the deal. During the process of completing this covenantal transaction, Yahweh even foretold him about the 400-year slavery that will befall his descendants. Clearly, Abram's fatherhood was all but a foregone conclusion at this point even though there was no child in sight.

One of the main attributes of Yahweh is Yahweh's holiness, and up till this moment, there had not been any significant emphasis on the importance of this attribute whilst interacting with Abram. However, it would seem that the matter was rising to the fore as Abram's relationship with Yahweh developed. It is also possible that this was

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<sup>12</sup> Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition*.

Yahweh's approach for taking care of this important matter before advancing to the next stage of the divine plans for Abram. Normally, direct dealings with humans were near-impossible for Yahweh owing the demand of holiness and Abram is not any different. However, because of the covenantal commitment to Abram, which includes the ultimate plan of redemption for the human race, Yahweh would gradually make sure that the demand for righteousness was satisfactorily met. According to Whitt in his treatment of 'sedeq' or God's holiness, he laboriously traces the essences of righteousness and holiness to God and which is most manifest in His interactions with people<sup>13</sup>.

The episode in Gen.15:1-6 suggests that Yahweh was not merely going after the main weight of challenges Abram was carrying, namely, his childlessness; rather, Yahweh wanted to address the requirement for righteousness before proceeding with other aspects of the redemptive plan<sup>14</sup>. To this end, God's conversation with Abram immediately exposed Abram's deep challenges when he responded by saying that he had no progeny to continue his lineage. Yahweh's approach was so successful that Abram literally blamed God for not giving him a child. Yet, Yahweh did not correct him but rather responded with an emphatic imagery that drove the point home for Abram. The impact was so effective on Abram that he believed God and it became sufficient to satisfy Yahweh's requirement for righteousness. Hence, a huge problem was now solved. Although there was yet no offspring, something much more important had occurred; Abram had received the gracious gift of righteousness and was ready for the next level of Yahweh's plans.

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<sup>13</sup> R. Keith Whitt, "Righteousness and Characteristics of Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 3 (2011): 71-84.

<sup>14</sup> *The Holiness Manifesto* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

The reckoning of righteousness to Abram is of great significance to the entire Biblical narrative. The rest of Yahweh's redemptive plan rests on this fundamental landmark and will be referenced multiple times in the New Testament as the grounds for the saving faith that is received in the Lord Jesus Christ. Interestingly, the Apostle Paul argues this point exhaustively in his letters and is probably mainly summarized in the statement that Abram is the father of all who believe. In Romans 4:16, Apostle Paul writes, "For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of us...) <sup>15</sup>". Clearly, this could be taken to mean that the theological significance of Gen.15:1-6 in the way it reflects Yahweh's imputation of righteousness on Abram plays a major role in understanding the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ <sup>16</sup>.

The essence of Yahweh's conversation was not merely to convey His intent of protecting and blessing Abram but more importantly to address his deepest challenge. It would seem that this challenge was two-fold. To Abram, it was the childlessness he and Sarai had been grappling with since they got married and to Yahweh, it appeared to be the challenge of faith unto righteousness. Thus, when Abram responded to Yahweh's greeting with the grunt about not having an heir, it presented the opportunity to address both problems. These seem like natural interpretations rising from the text but Buttrick draws a slightly different meaning from the same passage. He suggests that, "Abram was not voicing his doubt—his faith was praised in verse 6—but, rather, is asking for a sign

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<sup>15</sup> Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition*.

<sup>16</sup> Trevor Craigen, "Jesus' Blood and Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Imputation," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 19, no. 1 (2008): 141-144.

so he will know the promise is a promise of God<sup>17</sup>". The reason for this conclusion is not very obvious but it appears to be quite conceivable. Buttrick seems to be convinced that Abram had no doubts when it came to Yahweh's promises possibly because Abram left the land of the Chaldeans as a result of his faith in Yahweh's promises. Hence, the issue was not with Abram believing the promises, it was rather that he wanted to be sure Yahweh's promise was an ironclad promise which implies that Abram wanted a little more tangible proof that this promise of an heir was going to be fulfilled.

Buttrick continues further exposition of the Gen.15:6 by explaining what "believed" means or how it should be understood as he writes, "Though the verse does speak of "believed", the word means more than an inward assent to the promise of God. Abram's response might be termed *active* trust. If God guaranteed an heir, presumably Abram and Sarai strived actively to make babies; they trusted the promise<sup>18</sup>". This further establishes the fact that both Abram and Sarai believed the promises, yet it is not entirely inconceivable that although they both believed and tried to make babies, they were experiencing some level of frustration which became detectable from Abram's response to Yahweh. However Buttrick adds that "the text implies a living trust and not merely an acquiescent nod of the head<sup>19</sup>" implying that Abram's trust in Yahweh was no mere mental assent but must be construed to be originating from a much deeper place. This may be true, yet the fact that Abram responded out of his frustration probably points to an unresolved issue that is indicative of the need for even deeper trust in Yahweh's promise.

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<sup>17</sup> David G. Buttrick, "Genesis 15:1-18," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 393-97.

<sup>18</sup> David G. Buttrick, "Genesis 15:1-18," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 393-97.

<sup>19</sup> David G. Buttrick, "Genesis 15:1-18," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 393-397.

Clearly, Abram may have trusted the promises but there was still something inconspicuously lacking.

A different view of the imputed righteousness seen in Gen.15:6 is presented by Romer in his 2012 journal article. He analyzes the text “Abram believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness<sup>20</sup>”, proposed the idea that the “righteousness” in the second half of the verse is not necessarily referring to Abram, but to the One making the promise. He went to some detail in reviewing the text in the Septuagint, various translations of the Hebrew Bible and similar texts from the Old Testament and arrived at the conclusion that the “righteousness” so mentioned and traditionally understood to have been imputed to Abram, was not for Abram, but was in fact for God.

According to Romer, “Since the subject of the new phrase is not explicitly mentioned it would be logical to think that the subject is Abraham, as in the foregoing sentence.<sup>21</sup>” He further argues that the text is essentially about Abram finding Yahweh’s promise trustworthy which can naturally be characterized as righteousness or divine justice. While this introduces an entirely new way of viewing the righteousness in v.6, it is relatively difficult to accept.

The logical sequence of the text and its literary flow in context possibly forces a logical conclusion that the translation is correct in ascribing righteousness to Abram<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition*.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Römer, “Abraham’s Righteousness and Sacrifice: How to Understand (and Translate) Genesis 15 and 22,” *Communio Viatorum* 54, no. 1 (2012): 3–15.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “God’s Covenant with Abraham,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56 (2013): 249–271.



The change for the way this text is understood that Romer appears to be seeking seems to present a few theological difficulties to say the least.

To begin with, Abram's pressing need was not to find Yahweh's "righteous" because the progression from Genesis 12 to 15 sufficiently provides evidence to establish Yahweh's righteousness starting from the first encounter to that present moment in the narrative. Abram's need was rooted in his childlessness and he wanted some answers as to why Yahweh had not given him an heir yet and this was what he voiced when Yahweh approached him in a vision. What follows is that Yahweh emphatically refutes the notion that he would remain childless but uses strong imagery to reassure him that he would have a child, and not only that but that he would have innumerable descendants<sup>23</sup>.

Presumably, this was both convincing and persuasive enough that Abram believed and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. In this scenario, the issue was not Abram's level of conviction about the righteousness and/or the faithfulness of Yahweh, rather the reverse is probably true. The all-righteous, all-faithful and all-just Yahweh required a faith-commitment from Abram in order to proceed with the next stage of His plans for him and by extension for the world. This matter was clearly addressed and Abram became righteous by divine reckoning and not by moral efficacy<sup>24</sup>.

The main concern in the Gen.15:1-6 was Abram's unresolved issue of childlessness. Yahweh knew he had this problem and addressed it indirectly at first but when Abram rebuts and literally blames Him for prolonging the problem, He takes on the

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel A Klein, "Who Counted Righteousness to Whom?: Two Clashing Views by Shadal on Genesis 15:6," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (January 2008): 28-32.

<sup>24</sup> Max Rogland, "Abram's Persistent Faith: Hebrew Verb Semantics in Genesis 15:6," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 70, no. 2 (September 2008): 239-244.

matter head-on. After the exchange and the visual aid Abram was convinced and v.6 records that he believed God and this was reckoned to him as righteousness. This would have massive implications on the rest of the Bible, the redemptive narrative and systematic theology, but the most important point to note seems to be that at the point when Abram believed, the grip of his childlessness was over because now he has trusted Yahweh and Yahweh reckoned it as righteousness to him<sup>25</sup>.

### **New Testament (John 4:7-18)**

7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." 16 He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come

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<sup>25</sup> Niehaus, "God's Covenant with Abraham."

here.” 17 The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.”<sup>26</sup>

The fourth book of the New Testament generally known as the Gospel According to John was presumably written by Apostle John, son of Zebedee, one of Jesus’ disciples who many scholars believe to be have been a little closer to Jesus than the eleven<sup>27</sup>.

Although the authorship of the Fourth Gospel remains scholastically contentious, this project will regard him as the main author for all intents and purposes. Nevertheless, the literary structure of this Gospel has been frequently taken to reflect material consistent of multiple authors but the lack of compelling evidence seemingly prevents this view from going mainstream<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, most readers, which include literary experts, would prefer to preserve the main traditional authorship credit to Apostle John. When it comes to the age of the text, the oldest manuscripts and extra-biblical evidences point to a period within the first century AD, which significantly lends credence to the possible authorship of Apostle John<sup>29</sup>.

The purpose of the Fourth Gospel is a less contended matter since most agree that it was intended to share an account of the life and times of the Lord Jesus Christ with

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<sup>26</sup> Society of Biblical Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition: Fully Revised & Updated*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, Rev Upd edition (San Francisco, CA.: HarperOne, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Newsom, Ringe, and Lapsley, *Women’s Bible Commentary, Third Edition*.

<sup>28</sup> Patte, Croatto, and Okure, *Global Bible Commentary*.

<sup>29</sup> Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

added emphasis on His celestial characteristics<sup>30</sup>. The Gospel of John, right from the introduction is unabashed in its mission to present Jesus as the Son of God and equal in essence with God. This Gospel does not merely seek to develop a historically relatable account of the messianic narrative, but essentially aims at portraying the Messiah as this God-Man person whose advent, passion and ascension carries deep theological implications for the nature of God's dealings with humanity. To the presumptive author, Apostle John, Jesus was so much more than the highly anticipated Messiah of the Jews; He was both God and Man indeed.

The mission of the Book is however summarized in John 20: 30-31, "Now Jesus did many more signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."<sup>31</sup> Hence, the aim of the Gospel according to John was not merely to convince the reader that He is both the Messiah and the Son of God but more importantly that readers may believe this truth for the radical transformation of their lives<sup>32</sup>.

In the passage of John 4:7-18, the circumstances that led to the scenario is as follows. Jesus had become quite a public figure because of the notable miracles He performed. His meetings increasingly drew large crowds and His teachings were radically contrary to the religious and political establishment of His Day. Therefore,

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<sup>30</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Society of Biblical Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition: Fully Revised & Updated*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, Rev Upd edition (San Francisco, CA.: HarperOne, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Patte, Croatto, and Okure, *Global Bible Commentary*.

though seemingly loved by the crowds, He was notably unpopular with the leadership to the point that they sought ways to detract and opportunities to kill him. It was against this backdrop that Jesus and his disciples set out on voyage to Galilee. This meant that they would have to travel an obvious route where they could become relatively easy targets for the detractors. The other option was to cut through Samaria—something that most Jews would normally avoid because Jews and Samaritans do not interact since such interactions rendered them ceremoniously unclean according to the Jewish tradition.

There is another plausible view for Jesus' decision to pass through Samaria on His way to Galilee and not the usual Jordan River route. The impersonal verb "*had or dei (Greek.)*" used in v.4 suggests that it was more than a mere decision to take this route because the impersonal verb is often used in John's Gospel to indicate God's will. Therefore, this may not have been merely a logical necessity for Him but something about the decision seemed to fit into God's will for the moment. Although translated "must" in other verses, but John always used the verb "*dei*" to indicate a divine influence on that activity. Some examples are (John 3:7, 3:14, 3:30, 4:4, 4:20, 4:24, 9:4, 10:16, 12:34, and 20:9)<sup>33</sup>.

When they arrived at the Samaritan city of Sychar near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph and the location of Jacob's well, Jesus decided to rest by the well while the disciples went into the city to purchase food. It was about midday and the noonday sun must have been up in full blast. Shortly afterwards, a woman of Samaria appeared with her container to fetch water from the well. Interestingly, she was not

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<sup>33</sup> Biblical Studies Press, *NET Bible First Edition*, 1st Edition edition. (Biblical Studies Press, 2009).

named in the entire narrative but as she approached, Jesus requested a drink of water from her. Seeing that He was a Jew, she replied with a hint of consternation as to why He would ask her, a Samaritan woman, for water to drink. The writer adds a commentary to this portion that explains her response, namely that “Jews did not share things in common with Samaritans” (v.9b)<sup>34</sup>

Jesus responded by saying to her that if she could discern the gift of God, and who He was that was asking for water, she would forget traditions and ask Him for living water and she would have been given. Evidently, He was offering her something she did not realize she needed at this point. So she responds with a hint of respectful mockery by pointing out to Him that He had nothing to fetch the water from Jacob’s well which is very deep. Then in a twist, she follows up with another question which perhaps indicates she got a hint of what Jesus was saying to her. She asks, “...are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it...”<sup>35</sup> which perhaps signaled that while she did not fully comprehend what Jesus meant by living water, she knew He would have to get the water by some miracle which would probably prove Him to be greater than the ancestors.

In the same vain, she seemed to be throwing out claims to the Jacobian ancestry because many Jews at the time did not consider Samaritans pure enough to claim a shared

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<sup>34</sup> Society of Biblical Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition: Fully Revised & Updated*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, Rev Upd edition (San Francisco, CA.: HarperOne, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition*.

ancestry with the Jews because of the mixture of Samaritans with other non-Jewish tribes<sup>36</sup>.

Although Jesus was offering her living water, she was more interested in the physical water, and the defense of her cultural heritage even though there was no obvious threat coming from Jesus regarding her Samaritan origin<sup>37</sup>. In his response, Jesus decides to use the natural water discussion to expand on His offer for living water by adding that natural water satisfies temporarily but the water he was offering becomes a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. In effect, water and the quenching of thirst became the imagery for eternal life in Jesus' response.

At this point, the Samaritan woman was enthused and especially by the idea never coming back to fetch water from the well. So, she asks Jesus to give her this water to quench her thirst. Then Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back" (v.16a) to which she replied that she did not have a husband. Then Jesus told her that she was right in saying she did not have a husband because been through five divorces already and currently living with a man that is not her husband. At this point, she was obviously undone and probably wondered who this Stranger is that knew so much about her. The subsequent verses show that from that point, she took him to be a prophet but tried to deflect from her personal issues to a broader religious matter<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Teresa Okure, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42) in Africa," *Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (June 2009): 401-418.

<sup>37</sup> Stacy Kitahata and Craig L Nesson, "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 38, no. 1 (February 2011): 48-52.

<sup>38</sup> Peter C Phan, "An Interfaith Encounter at Jacob's Well: A Missiological Interpretation of John 4:4-42," *Mission Studies* 27, no. 2 (2010): 160-175.

Although Jesus engages in the conversation that seemed of interest to her, He carried the conversation in such a manner that helped her arrive at the critical conclusion that He, Jesus was the Messiah. This ended further interrogation and/or conversation because the lightbulb came on and she understood the thirst, and the living water that gushes up to eternal life. It was an “aha!” moment because she seemed to have found the resolution to all her issues<sup>39</sup>.

The Samaritan Woman narrative in John’s Gospel has held a deep appeal for many believers and churchgoing people of all times because of its relatability. On one hand, anyone can place themselves in the shoes of the nameless woman who needed help to resolve her unmet needs, and on the other, it is quite endearing to the needy that the One who can actually do something about his/her situation knows the right time to show up with the living water that gushes up to everlasting life. Though water played a pivotal role in this passage, the main issue was way more than the problems that ordinary water from a well could solve; even if that well was Jacob’s.

The central focus of the passage can be captured as follows: at the core, it was about meeting, finding and knowing Jesus as the One who satisfies all of life’s thirsts. But it was also about receiving eternal life and salvation which would not be possible without encountering Jesus. It was about saving grace reaching Gentiles as well since Jews have no dealing with Samaritans; Jesus came to rescue the Jews and the Gentiles as well (Rom.1:16)<sup>40</sup>. Then metaphorically, it was about water—water is the most essential

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<sup>39</sup> L. Malcolm and J. Ramsey, “On Forgiveness and Healing : Narrative Therapy and the Gospel Story,” *Word & World* 30, no. 1 (2010): 23–32.

<sup>40</sup> Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition*.



compound to life because life cannot exist without water—and it is quite evident from the passage that Jesus presents Himself as the spiritual parallel to water. Just how someone may die without water, the same is true about spiritual death without Jesus<sup>41</sup>.

The literary cues seen from this passage reflect the main genres of the John's Gospel which include monologues and dialogues. However, this passage is specifically a major dialogical narrative featuring Jesus and the Samaritan woman. It also features some prose narrative characteristics in the way the story is told, and includes some parallelism, and hint of symbolic language. The passage is not necessarily pithy but conveys a persuasive writing style that is decisively theological. It would appear that John's aim for the Book and this passage was to magnify Christ as the Source of Life<sup>42</sup>. The key words here are water, thirst, eternal, and life.

The passage alludes to the metaphors of thirst, water and well to depict the spiritual thirst, Living Water, and the wellspring of eternal life. These metaphoric constructs were intentionally used to progressively unveil the main subject Jesus wanted to address. He used a woman's visit to the well for water and his thirst to address a larger problem in her life. When she approached and He asked for a drink of water, nothing could have prepared her for what was coming. She immediately thought He was really thirsty and wanted some water to quench His thirst but she could not be further from the truth because He was going after her life's thirst and not His own<sup>43</sup>. The relatability of the

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<sup>41</sup> Peter J Scaer, "Jesus and the Woman at the Well: Where Mission Meets Worship," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (January 2003): 3–18.

<sup>42</sup> Jane Barter Moulaison, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Valuing Family and Prophecy in Christian Motherhood," *Touchstone* 24, no. 1 (January 2006): 25–33.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Scott Wilson, "Living Water in John 4:7-30," *Ex auditu* 30 (2014): 165–167.

notion of thirst and quenching it with a drink of water was an effective use of symbolism to get the woman's attention. Without a doubt, thirsting and drinking were two activities that are common to all living human beings and to be sure, everyone thirsts often and would naturally find water or any other liquid to quench the thirst.

The parallelism between natural thirst for water, and soulish thirst for satisfaction played a critical role in reaching beyond the façade to address the real unresolved issues she was unwilling to share with a stranger. Hence, as the conversation progressed, it was evident that although she tried to keep conversation on the physical water and the well, it is quite reasonable to believe she was getting a hint of where Jesus was going<sup>44</sup>. She reluctantly went along while interjecting with other impersonal issues like the common ancestry of Jews and Samaritans, who was right about the place of worship and the coming of the Messiah.

In each case, Jesus did not shy away from her attempts to redirect the conversation but engaged her with pointed replies to her insinuations. However, it would seem that He let the main issue simmer in the background while He addressed the attempts at parrying off the conversation to something less personal. Therefore, when it seemed appropriate to introduce a deeper personal matter, Jesus went for it and asked her about her current living situation. Although she gave a half-truth response, Jesus accepted it as enough truth on which to build the next stage of the conversation. So, He went ahead and put everything regarding her living situation into proper context by telling her what she did not want to tell Him<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Brooks Duff, "Living Water: Images, Symbols and Settings of Early Christian Baptism," *Church History* 81, no. 4 (December 2012): 949–951.

<sup>45</sup> Scaer, "Jesus and the Woman at the Well."

This passage is also full of important imagery. As with the parallelisms, the imagery of water and thirst were used to convey deep spiritual truths as Jesus clarified that her need was not necessarily physical water but another kind of water that gushes up to everlasting life. Hence the imagery of water served the purpose of communicating the truth of messianic satisfaction. In a sense, Jesus was pointing out to her that He Himself was to her and everyone else what water was to human beings; but where drinkers of natural water will thirst again, those who have Him will never thirst again because He will be within them a spring that has everlasting satisfaction. In effect, using the imagery of water, thirst, and eternal life, Jesus gave her an object lesson that what she's been looking for without realizing it was to quench her thirst all along was Him and through Him she would find rest and resolution for all the unmet needs<sup>46</sup>. John's writing style also saliently points out that this is a generic need for all readers as he presents Jesus as the Messiah to all.

The context of this passage within the broader structure of the Gospel of John can be regarded as consistent with his purpose for writing the Gospel as identified in John 20:31, "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and through believing, you may have life in his name."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the passage fits properly within the context of the entire Gospel because much like the dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3, it carries the writer's main intention of displaying

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<sup>46</sup> Duff, "Living Water."

<sup>47</sup> Society of Biblical Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition: Fully Revised & Updated*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, Rev Upd edition (San Francisco, CA.: HarperOne, 2006).

Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God in whom anyone who believes would have life everlasting.

Both dialogues are strikingly similar because they addressed deeper spiritual imperatives using natural symbolisms which had the similar effect of possibly stunning the persons in these dialogues before they finally received full clarity. Therefore, the sequence of the writing suggests a deliberate alignment of events that is contextually faithful to the overall objectives of the Book. It is safe to suggest at this point that the Samaritan Woman's narrative in John's Gospel is one of the outstanding discourses aimed at portraying Jesus as the Source of Living Water, which in fact translates to the Messiah.

According to Malcom & Ramsey, the woman at the well is often portrayed with negative connotations which, when looked at closely, is a narrow-minded view of the narrative. Even Jesus did not condemn her but accepted her truth, albeit incomplete, and proceeding with His offer to give her the living water. In their view, "...although Jesus addressed the Samaritan's difficulty with man—and this identified and externalized her problem—this *truth* did not define her identity."<sup>48</sup> They further argue that although the Samaritan had clearly social and psychological challenges, they were not the point of Jesus ministry to her in a manner that individuals without similar problems might exempt themselves from Jesus' offer of living water.

The problem was merely an access point for Jesus to address the deep unresolved issues in the Samaritan woman's life. It should therefore be argued that the same is applicable to everyone regardless of circumstance because the ubiquity of thirst and water

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<sup>48</sup> Malcolm and Ramsey, "On Forgiveness and Healing."

does not leave out anyone because they have some semblance of moral fortitude. Both theologians and psychologists can learn a thing or two from this, namely that people's outcome in life, no matter how admirable or deplorable, does not define them, rather they are intrinsically in need of Living Water which parallels their need for natural water. This Living Water, according to the text, and according to John's Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

At the well, the Samaritan woman had one thing on her mind, she simply wanted to pick up some water and head back home. Some have suggested that her circumstances may have led her to live a reclusive life, hiding as much as she could from the public. This view is mere conjecture because Samaritans were known for not holding Jewish customary traditions over themselves, and history shows that Samaria was not monotheistic<sup>49</sup>. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that her coming to the well was not necessarily because of her social circumstances. It is also same to assume that there would have been a good number of men and women in such situations or worse in light of the loose religious foundations of the Samaritans. While other matters were important to the leadership in Judea like baptisms and Jesus' growing influence among the people, it would seem that paramount in Jesus' to do list for that day was meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Sychar. Kitahata & Nesson put it this way "Jesus traveled out of his way leaving behind the bickering and competing over baptisms, to meet with a woman of Samaria"<sup>50</sup> This view further advances John's missional

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<sup>49</sup> Okure, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4)".

<sup>50</sup> Stacy Kitahata and Craig L Nesson, "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 38, no. 1 (February 2011): 48–52.

inclination in writing the Gospel and definitely elevates the importance of this meeting, and the resolution of issues in the woman's life, in the entire scheme of things.

To be sure, unresolved issues are universal and sweeps across all peoples of all ages. While the unresolved issues vary greatly, the narrative of the Samaritan at the well unifies them under one category—thirst. And Jesus provided the one solution that removes the unmet needs while destroying both the psychological and emotional baggage that often trails unmet needs and unresolved issues. In what will sound like a twist, Talbert summarizes Janeth Norfleete Day's book *The Woman at the Well: Interpretation of John 4:1-42 in Retrospect and Prospect* like this, "(1) that she came to the well at noon does not necessarily mean she was a social outcast.... (2) That the woman was married so many times could have been for economic and social reasons rather than lustfulness<sup>51</sup>" The first conclusion is consistent with ideas already discussed in this material and it helps to find a resource that develops it even more succinctly. Indeed, the view that she was a social outcast is a possibly forced one on the narrative.

The second summary however has a thought-provoking quality to it because the narrative is not usually thus construed. Yet, it is a compelling assumption to make and significantly tones the negative rhetoric when discussing the passage. Her serial marriage may have been an offshoot of socioeconomic pressure, or it may have been what is believed more traditionally the outcome of lustful desire, it is important not to define people by their challenges. However, it is noteworthy that this conclusion may be weakened, at least slightly, but the fact that she was already cohabiting with another man

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<sup>51</sup> Charles H Talbert, "The Woman at the Well: Interpretation of John 4:1-42 in Retrospect and Prospect," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31, no. 3 (September 2004): 358-62.

that was not her husband as Jesus pointed out. She also did not recognize the man as her husband nor gave any indication that she was on the verge of getting married one more time. Yet, with all these it does not warrant a negative stereotyping because even Jesus did not stereotype her negatively.

According to Talbert, another critical summary to draw from Day's exegesis of John 4:1-42 was that, "the response of the people to her witness indicates that she was not immoral or a social outcast."<sup>52</sup> This is also thought-provoking because while the argument is appealingly true, in order for it to be more satisfying, it needs further expansion. However, this expansion may take us to the outer rims of the passage. Therefore, it is probably more prudent to settle for questions. Was her witness received because of her reputation or because of her transformation? Who gets the credit for witness, Jesus or her? One cannot give her credit for the compelling witness without some degree of difficulty for obvious reasons.

It is quite characteristic of any life transformed to become exuberantly convincing in their witness which may or may not have something to do with the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is safe to conclude that reputation is of very little significance when someone's witness is about the spiritual transformation received from another. The credit therefore goes to the One who gave the transformation as the reason why her witness was received and not the recipient's reputation because it has nothing to do with her moral standing in the community—credit must be given to Jesus.

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<sup>52</sup> Charles H Talbert, "The Woman at the Well: Interpretation of John 4:1-42 in Retrospect and Prospect," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31, no. 3 (September 2004): 359.

Moulaison, referring to the moment in the passage when Jesus told the Samaritan to go and call her husband argues the following, “Jesus encounters the woman precisely within the very complexity of her embodied life; yet he neither rebukes nor rejects her for them. And it is here, within this intimate encounter—it is through the very moment where she is addressed in all her messy and entangled embodiment—that the Samaritan woman *recognizes* who Jesus is...”<sup>53</sup> She seemed to be alluding to the fact that it was not until Jesus’ touched on something that was quite intimate to her that she suddenly realizes the point of this encounter. Moulaison rightly captures the moment when he said this encounter made the most impact in her life because prior to this point, the conversation was not poignantly intimate. She suddenly realizes that this Stranger must be a notable Man of God or a Prophet and figured this might be leading somewhere different for her. Her emotional dilemma, her marital rollercoaster, and other social and/or psychological issues she faced suddenly came together under the illumination of the Light of the Word and her life was transformed.

### Conclusion

Abram and the nameless Samaritan Woman by the well are from two very distinct worlds but they had one thing in common—they had unresolved issues. For Abram, it was the lack of an heir and for the Samaritan, it was not clearly identified but Jesus knew what it was. In Abram’s situation, Yahweh appeared to him in a vision and told him not to be afraid because He would be his protection and instead of the usual response

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<sup>53</sup> Jane Barter Moulaison, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Valuing Family and Prophecy in Christian Motherhood,” *Touchstone* 24, no. 1 (January 2006): 25–33.



showing gratitude and appreciation, Abram quietly revolted arguing that he had not heir, that Yahweh had not given him an heir to continue his household after him. Yahweh's greeting and blessing seemed to strike a nerve and caused Abram to speak out from the place where he was hurting which is indicative of the presence of unresolved issues or unmet needs. Yahweh does not rebuke him but instead takes it upon Himself to unveil to him His plan to give him a son through whom he would also have descendants. Abram believed Yahweh and it was credited to him by Yahweh as righteousness.

In a strikingly similar manner, Jesus interjects the everyday life of an unknown Samaritan woman by Jacob's well in the Samaritan town of Sychar, and knowing she was likely to turn Him down, He went ahead and asked her for a drink of water. She declines, citing the forbidden interaction between Jews and Samaritans. He offers her living water, and when she showed some interest, He goes after her familial life to which she answers truthfully in the least embarrassing way while carefully keeping mum about the unsavory details. Jesus commends her for telling the truth, but goes further to inform her that He knew all about the details she did not want to expose. Clearly, like Abram, Jesus struck a nerve but as with Abram, it became the platform for a divine encounter that led to her realization that Jesus was indeed present there to sate her need for eternal life. In both narratives, their responses provide a glimpse into their emotional and psychological states...Abram said "what are you going to give me..." seemingly excluding his wife as indicated by the use of the pronoun "me" because to him this was personal. Likewise, the Samaritan said "give me this water so I don't have to come and draw water from this well", which is another indication that she wanted it for herself, indicated once more by the word "me".

What is clear from both scenarios is that their unresolved issues were so deep-seated that it was part of their psychological frame of mind and likewise, the same solution was provided by Yahweh and Jesus since in each case they were convinced through the interplay of imagery, compassion and grace. They both believed and found satisfactory closure for their unresolved issues and unmet needs.

As we transition to the next chapter, a historical overviewed is examined as a backdrop for further understanding the nature of unmet needs and unresolved issues. It looks into the life of St. Augustine and search for areas in his life to see how unmet needs and unresolved issues played it's part.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The development of Christianity as a religious movement beyond the Apostolic era has been a source of utmost fascination for many religious historians because of the characteristic political and religious dramas that ensued as the nascent movement jostled to find its place in the then overcrowded pantheistic world of evolving enlightenment. As a religion, Christianity faced the uphill task of stating its fundamental claims against the mainstream religious organizations of the day and as a social movement, it baffled the proponents of the popular socio-political frameworks in which it thrived<sup>1</sup>. Over the passage of time, as the adherents of Christianity mainly known as believers or disciples of Christ began to forge a path for their beliefs and communal systems of life, their microcosmic appeal became increasingly threatening to the governmental structures particularly because of their apparent allegiance to another King, deemed by them to be the King of Kings who rose from the dead. Hence, whereas the authorities did not know what to make of this, in part because they broke no rules, but were characteristically joyful as they expressed hope in the return of their Risen King<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 2: The Reformation to the Present Day*, 2nd edition. (New York: HarperOne, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 2: The Reformation to the Present Day*, 2nd edition. (New York: HarperOne, 2010).

There was a significant uprising and religious persecution against believers in Israel which led to the scattering of Christians and the spread of the Faith throughout the region which was predominantly under the Roman Empire<sup>3</sup>. As the spread continued to unfold, its ideals became increasingly more appealing to both Jews and Gentiles though the Gentiles became more proactive in their religious activism within the Faith. What followed was a befuddlement of the powers that be which can be attributed to at least two possible reasons. The first is that the Christians were perceived to be non-conformists to the common trends of society<sup>4</sup>. They appeared to embrace a degree of asceticism and would not participate in the usual rituals, proclivities and norms of other religious entities. The second was that they believed in the Christ, whom they proclaimed to have been condemned to death and crucified on a cross for crimes he did not commit, and more importantly, that he was alive having risen from the dead and is coming back to setup his kingdom on earth.

To some elite, it was something to be discarded as foolishness that often rises among the masses and dissipates just the same way they rose, but to others, it was an apparent loss of control over the lives of people who were supposed to be subjects to the Emperor and his political system. The latter view is clearly one that is quite unacceptable yet it became more popular among the ruling class. The upshot of this was that a massive persecution of the Church broke out as the Roman authorities sought to regain control and curb 'potential' dissidence. Many were incarcerated, others were martyred and many

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Giannone, "Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 21, no. 1 (1994): 69–76.

<sup>4</sup> Averil Cameron, "Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century," *Church History* 71, no. 3 (September 2002): 640–642.

more were forced to flee farther from the most dangerous cities. Equally, many of the Churches went underground to avoid being openly targeted by the authorities. The outcome of all this was quite profound as the movement continue to swell in numbers despite all the oppositional efforts of the imperial government<sup>5</sup>.

The Faith continued to evolve both as a Church and as a global entity seeking to maintain the commands of Jesus Christ until He returns; yet, while the external challenge threatened to stop the movement, it also had internal issues to resolve in order to maintain integrity and doctrinal purity. Internally, it was not clear what the overarching edicts of the Church were, they did not have a canon of scripture yet but were circulating letters mainly purported to have been penned down by the Apostles to the churches before their death<sup>6</sup>. These manuscripts were hand-copied by scribes and spread across the churches in various cities which, as expected, often gave rise to slight disparities among copies. However, the copy errors or intentional insertions of passages within the main texts were not the main challenges in this regard because some manuscripts emerged whose authorship were unverifiable. While some of these ‘unknown’ manuscripts bore close semblances to known works, others were outlandishly dissimilar to the doctrinal positions of the known manuscripts. To this end, Church leadership knew something needed to be done to curb proliferation of various manuscripts, especially the fakes, while compiling

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<sup>5</sup> Arnaldo Dante Momigliano, “Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century AD,” in *Christian and Judaic Invention of History* (Atlanta: Scholars Pr, 1990), 103–121.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen B Chapman, “The Old Testament and the Church after Christendom,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 9, no. 2 (September 2015): 159–183.

the ones that are considered authentic works of the Apostles and essential for the doctrinal life of the Church<sup>7</sup>.

Accomplishing these tasks were no small undertakings because it meant developing criteria for separating authentic from inauthentic works. Beyond that, they also had the arduous task of deciding which seemingly authentic manuscripts or letters would not be included in the compilation that would be used to chart the future of the Faith. This process took an enormous amount of time to make some headway but by the third century CE, the first canon of scripture emerged. It included the Jewish Bible or the Old Testament and the New Testament comprised of 27 ‘books’ which included the Four Gospels and Apostles’ Epistles<sup>8</sup>.

The Canonization of the Christian Bible was pivotal to the development of the Faith because it occurred at a time of apparent peace and minimal persecution. At this point in Christian history, the Faith had become the recognized and official adopted religion of the ruling class not mainly because they truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but because they saw that Christianity had the potency for uniting the empire like nothing else ever could<sup>9</sup>. Consequently, a few notable men or ‘Fathers’ as they would later be known emerged as key players in the final processes of this accomplishment. More than that, they contributed meaningfully toward shaping the theology of

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<sup>7</sup> Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Hartog, “Formation of the Bible: The Story of the Church’s Canon,” *Criswell Theological Review* 11, no. 1 (September 2013): 142–145.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Hartog, “Formation of the Bible: The Story of the Church’s Canon,” *Criswell Theological Review* 11, no. 1 (September 2013): 142–145.

Christianity and understanding of fundamental components of the Faith. One of such Fathers is called Saint Augustine of Hippo.

Born to a pagan father and a devout Christian mother, Augustine of Hippo's early life was mostly influenced by his mother's faith<sup>10</sup>. This went on to be the overarching drive in his pursuit of academic achievements. Growing up, Augustine became quite enamored by intellectual endeavors and the ideals of philosophical thought and supernatural phenomena to which he put in quite an effort in pursuing. His quest would bring him eventually to a head-on confrontation with the Faith of his upbringing. Consequently, he became quite convinced of his salvation through the exercise of faith in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having dabbled quite unsatisfactorily in other religious and pseudo-religious pursuits prior to his conversion, much of which he found unchallenging and unintellectual enough to consistently make sense; his faith in Jesus Christ rose on the back of his philosophical foundations.

With the uncanny ability for deep thought, reason, contemplation, rhetoric and logic, his depth of understanding of biblical teachings and the Gospels were only helped along by the pursuit of higher intellectual enlightenment. To this end, his findings, musings and writings soon began to get the attention of contemporaries, superiors, and opponents. And when he finally embraced monasticism, it was clear that he would become a theologian. Becoming a theologian for Augustine was not a matter of external compulsion, it was, for the most part, a choice<sup>11</sup>. He became a priest mainly because to him, attaining the highest level of discipleship was of paramount importance. Therefore,

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<sup>10</sup> Louis Bertrand, *Saint Augustin* (D. Appleton, 1914).

<sup>11</sup> Louis Bertrand, *Saint Augustin* (D. Appleton, 1914).

the quest for necessary knowledge, both in thought and practice, was an essential prerequisite that drove him into the monastery where he became a priest of the Catholic church.

A detailed discourse of all the achievements and works of St. Augustine is entirely beyond the scope of the effort. Christianity, as we know it today, has been deeply influenced by the works of Augustine and he deserves the honorable place in history he has been rightfully accorded. Yet, the main thrust of this paper, in keeping the overarching goal of identifying the possible influences of unmet needs and unresolved issues in a congregational setting, is to look at an aspect of St. Augustine's life that most scholars would mostly avoid. There have been speculations, maybe even claims, that St. Augustine may have had homosexual tendencies. Hence, it is the aim of this paper to look as closely as possible into his life primarily to see whether there is any reliable justification for these claims and/or speculations<sup>12</sup>. It is also hoped that this with some luck will be linkable to any number of potential unmet needs or unresolved issues in the life of this great man of God.

The approach of this paper will be to begin with a cursory overview of Augustine's early life, education, adulthood and professional life. Some of his works and achievements will be highlighted as well but some detail will be devoted to his interpersonal relationships by seeking out and examining a significant amount of historical material. Then a conclusion would be developed to show whether the findings

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<sup>12</sup> Alan Soble, "Correcting Some Misconceptions about St. Augustine's Sex Life," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 4 (2002): 545-569.



are plausible, maybe even true or just what they've been for centuries—mere speculations.

### **Early Life**

Born Aurelius Augustine Hipponensis to Patrius and Monica Hipponensis November 13, 354, his early life was essentially routine and in pace with the social settings of the heavily Roman occupied city of Thagaste, Numidia (now Souk Ahras in Algeria)<sup>13</sup>.

The childhood Augustine experienced was quite normal in light of the prevailing socio-economic situation of the city of Thagaste, Algeria. As a child of moderately well-to-do parents, it stands to reason to expect some level of economic comfort and affluence but this was not the case with Augustine because of the kind of family life espoused by his father Patrius. Historically, the society was quite stratified much like any capitalist society which was even intensified by the imperialist Roman occupation. Within the class structure of Thagaste, people's interactions were generally expected to remain inside their socio-economic classes. While interactions among different classes were informally discouraged, they were not altogether uncommon except where slaves were involved.

Family life for Augustine can be described in today's terms as middleclass. His father, Patrius worked as an official of the Roman administration possibly as a tax collector and was quite influential by fourth century standards in North Africa. Therefore, naturally, he could afford a decent way of life for his family which includes a good

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<sup>13</sup> Abp of Canterbury Augustine Saint, *Saint Augustine: Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, Augustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo. Works (New York: New City Press, 2008).

education for Augustine and his siblings. Although there was a notion in which they were well-off as a family, Patrius' interests were a little more diversified. He was a man given to pleasure and was not apologetic about his lifestyle. He was not a Christian but embraced paganism which does not place any significant inhibitions to the proclivities its adherents<sup>14</sup>. Mr. Patrius not only pursued his sensual inclinations, he was also quite abusive at home. He treated his wife, Augustine's mother Monica harshly and seemingly encouraged his own mother (Augustine's paternal grandmother) to treat Monica with much disrespect and roughness. And the whole time, she responded with as much pious restraint as she could muster, and all of these frequently occurred in full view of Augustine and his siblings when they came along<sup>15</sup>.

Why would a devout Christian woman marry a debauched pagan like Patrius? This question goes to the roots of North African Cultures and traditions much of which is still probably in parts of present-day North Africa. In Fourth Century Thagaste, marriage was viewed quite differently from the Western notions of marriage we have come to know and embrace. For the most part, marriages were arranged and not necessarily based on affection, choice and romance. While instances of love and romance were not completely lacking, these were not the main determinants of marriages in this age. In light of the Roman occupation and social statuses, marriage was more of a matter of citizenship and social engineering whereby people were inclined and/or compelled to marry within their socio-economic class.

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<sup>14</sup> Miles Hollingworth, *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Nancy E Nienhuis, "Battered Women and the Construction of Sanctity," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17, no. 1 (2001): 33–61.

Many marriages would eventually turn into what can be described as great love stories but for most marriages, they were replete with physical and verbal abuses as the couples discover their incompatibilities and differences. Abuses in marriages were often worsened when religious differences exist between the couples and it is not difficult to see why<sup>16</sup>. On top of the difficulties associable to the marital incompatibilities, the dissimilar religious allegiances deepen the existing divides within marriages not to mention the age-old tradition of the subjugation of women. Monica's marriage to Patrius was believed to have been arranged but being a Christian, she learned to love him and her devotion to God must have been an immense help in dealing with a pagan husband who had no problem being abusive to her and often broke the marriage vow through infidelity<sup>17</sup>.

Augustine's childhood was forged within this framework and started an early education. His mother, Monica, who eventually became one of his greatest influencers, never ceased to raise young Augustine in the ways of the Lord as much as she knew. It is also worth noting that despite the abuse she suffered from her pagan husband, she never ceased to try to convert him to Christianity. It was not until the time of his death that he caved, accepted Jesus and got baptized. Augustine's mother remains an excellent role-model for Apostle Peter's teaching regarding forbearance, longsuffering and patience as evangelistic tools when involved in a religiously mixed marriage. 1Peter 3:1-2 says "Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by their wives' conduct,

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<sup>16</sup> Beverly Mayne & Nancy E Nienhius, "Battered Women and Construction of Sanctity".

<sup>17</sup> "Augustine's Father - 01 | St Augustine of Hippo | Order of St Augustine," accessed April 30, 2016, <http://augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=49>.

when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps she was quite persuaded of this promise and endured marital hardships for the hope of converting her beloved unbelieving husband. Kienzle and Nienhuis (2001) rejected this notion of suffering abuse as “theological complicity” to domestic violence<sup>19</sup>.

Augustine was not regarded as an exceptional student in his early days and probably never construed himself as one that would attain remarkable greatness. Yet, the shaping of his life academically, environmentally, and within his family context would propel him into life experiences he never imagined possible. While there were many instances of apparent failure to properly articulate a strong religious identity as he dabbled between the strong faith of his mother and the irreligiosity of his father, he eventually arrived at his religious niche and became quite influential in the affairs of the church in his day. His uneventful early school days went past quickly mainly leaving behind memories of his turbulent family life with his father’s idiosyncrasies and the loving warmth of his saintly mother and now he was set to find his own identity in the years that follow.

In sum, his early years between birth on November 13, 354 and about the age of twelve in 366, his primary education in Thagaste provided the foundations of studies in the classical languages and arithmetic. While he loathed math and Greek, he essentially loved to study Latin and found the Latin classics very captivating. Despite the dysfunction in the family, both parents seemed quite committed to his education and

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<sup>18</sup> Society of Biblical Literature, *HarperCollins Study Bible - Student Edition: Fully Revised & Updated*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Wayne A. Meeks, Rev Upd edition. (San Francisco, CA.: HarperOne, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Kienzle and Nienhuis, “Battered Women and the Construction of Sanctity.”

made significant sacrifices to ensure he went to the right schools and received a proper education. It was almost as if this was the one thing they had in common—Patrius and Monica were quite devoted to giving their children as good an education as they could. The same year (366), Augustine was enlisted in a high school in the academic city of Madaura which was about thirty miles from Thagaste. Travelling over to the new city to continue his education was probably the first time he ever left Thagaste which must have been rather an enchanting trip for young Augustine<sup>20</sup>. Madaura was a Roman town devoted mainly to education and religion. It was built in the usual Roman fashion with great sights and well-curated structures—no doubt it was the choice place to get an education within that region of Rome Colonized North Africa<sup>21</sup>.

### **Patrius' Fatherhood**

Augustine's experience of fatherhood began with his father Patrius who was from a good home by Thagaste standards. Being from what is considered a good family meant that there was some level of affluence and privilege associable to his upbringing. His adherence to paganism warranted his hostility to Christians and Christianity. Yet, he had no problem marrying Monica who was at least 18 years younger than him. Patrius' position as a Decurion to the Roman government may have been indicative of the fact that he must have had some type of formal education to qualify to this office; or he may have been given the position as a result of his family's influence. Being a man who loved

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<sup>20</sup> Hollingworth, *Saint Augustine of Hippo*.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Graham, *Roman Africa: An Outline of the History of the Roman Occupation of North Africa, Based Chiefly Upon Inscriptions and Monumental Remains in That Country* (Longmans, Green, and Company, 1902).

the good life, he was reputed to be quite generous on occasion and yet given to a fiery temper whenever he felt provoked by anyone. The family consisted of his mother, his wife Monica and three children—Augustine, Navigius and Perpetua<sup>22</sup>.

Patrius tried the best he could to be a good father and was essentially preoccupied with providing for the household. In this regard, he arguably did very well but being a faithful husband to Monica was a completely different story. While there are many possible reasons for his seeming indifference and abusiveness, it might have been that he basically detested his wife's faith. Being a believer in a home where the head is a pagan is the recipe for persecution and Monica was no exception. Patrius' hostility toward his wife was exacerbated by his mother's meanness toward her as well. However, Augustine would later recount that his father showed more interest in him when he was sixteen and came home for a brief moment from college while his father gathered more resources for him to continue. Augustine remembers his father being quite elated as he gradually matured into manhood and even verbalized his affection for him at this stage of his life.

Although Augustine enjoyed the temporary attention from his father, he was deeply unsatisfied with him because of he could not get past his father's maltreatment toward his mother. By this time, he was now old enough to know that his father had been grossly unfaithful to his mother and detested him for it. Patrius however did not cease to show pride in his first son until his death by unknown circumstances shortly afterwards. Just before his death however, Patrius and his mother gave their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized into Christianity. Monica's patience and perseverance paid off as she finally joyfully led them to the Lord. The extent to which Patrius' fatherhood

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<sup>22</sup> "Augustine's Father - 01 | St Augustine of Hippo | Order of St Augustine."

shaped his son may perhaps become significantly evident in his adult life as he seemingly sought for fatherly role models to probably fill the void his unsatisfactory relationship with his father left. Initially, in his final transitional teenage years, his resentment towards his father (post-humus) was sharp and petulant but as he matured he tone down his emotions and yielded to more gracious feelings to his father.

### **Augustine's Mother, Monica**

Monica is believed to have been born in Thagaste around 332 into a Christian family probably with Donatist views. Around the same period the persecution of Christians had begun to subside as it became increasingly appealing to the Roman Imperialists that it could potentially be the most unifying religion of the empire. Donatism was a heretical view that placed emphasis on the moral standing of the minister for the effectiveness or efficacy of any sacrament administered. Made popular by the Bishop of Casae Nigrae named Donatus, it suggests that the seriousness of a minister's sin essentially taints and destroys the validity of the recipients' sacraments<sup>23</sup>. By implication, this meant that if a sinning Minister prays for the conversion of nonbeliever and she/he becomes a Christian accepting baptism, the conversion and baptism are both rendered unacceptable because of the minister's sins. The remedy for this according to the sect was that the recipients of any sacrament from a sinning minister must be repeated with a 'clean' minister for their sacraments to be valid. As a result, it became a practice

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<sup>23</sup> "Donatism," *CARM - The Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*, accessed April 29, 2016, <https://carm.org/donatism>.

among adherents whereby rebaptisms were ministered to adherents who have doubts about the ministers under whom they were first baptized.

Donatism originated from a rejection of the ordination of Bishop Caecilian as the Bishop of Carthage because Bishop Felix of Aptanga who had allegedly allied with the Romans in the destruction of Bibles when the edict went out for all religious articles to be destroyed within the empire in 304 C.E. was one of the three officiating Bishops during the consecration. The only religious practices permitted by the edict were the burning of incense to Roman idols and the worship of the state-sanction deities. Other religious practices including Christianity and Bibles were prohibited and publicly burned. Since many Christians refused to give up their bibles, a serious wave of persecutions ensued and this was sanctioned by Emperor Diocletian who gave the edict. In the wake of the following persecutions, many believers went into hiding and others simply hide away the copies of the Bible in their possession. Unfortunately, with the mounting persecution, many Christians surrendered their copies and fragments of the sacred writings and even betrayed other Christians who would not give theirs up. They were seen as traitors but a new word was coined for believers who betrayed believers, namely ‘traditors’<sup>24</sup>.

About 70 Bishops within and around Numidia formed a synod and unanimously declared that Bishop Felix was a sinner in which case all the sacraments he performed were deemed unacceptable and void. By this standard, the consecration of Bishop Caecilian was not recognized by this synod of bishops as real because it was tainted by the sins of one of the officiating ministers. While the main doctrine of Donatism draws

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<sup>24</sup> “CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Donatists,” accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05121a.htm>.



significant sympathy because of the high living standards required of ordained ministers, it is essentially wrong because it bases the efficacy of God's word, power and transformation on the moral uprightness of the minister. This is biblically wrong because God alone remains the power behind all sacramental blessings. The movement increased for a while and then began to wane gradually after it was declared a heresy within the ecumenical councils that followed<sup>25</sup>.

This was the Christian season into which Monica was born and raised. It is believed that she was a Donatist communicant and perhaps her parents believed in rebaptism. However, her Christian roots were deeply embedded in devotion to God and she was regarded by all who knew her to be a very chaste and devout woman. She married Patrius when she turned 22 years old at a local magistrate in Thagaste. Though he was a relentlessly worldly man, Monica never missed an opportunity to reflect Christ in her marriage by remaining faithful to a very unfaithful man whom she finally converted to Christianity shortly before his death. Monica was the greatest influence on Augustine's life as she labored to give him a strong Christian foundation but even when her husband gave his heart to Jesus, her seventeen year-old son, Augustine, still rejected Christianity.

The influence she had on her son was so strong that she would do everything she could to make sure Augustine continued his education initially in classical rhetoric in Madaura prior to moving to other cities for more advanced studies. Her devotion to her son was a merely reflection of her commitment to the Faith as she worked tirelessly in

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Haste, "'So Many Voices': The Piety of Monica, Mother of Augustine," *The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry* 4, no. 1 (September 2013): 6–10.

various capacities, despite the gender limitations, for advancing the courses of the church in North Africa. In Augustine's prolific writings, he generously praised her for all the sacrifices she made to help him attain his stature as a renowned theological thinker. Augustine recalls her mother saying "I Son, as far as I am concerned, nothing in this life now gives me pleasure. I do not know why I am still here, since I have no further hopes in this world..."<sup>26</sup> She adds "I did have one reason to live a little longer: to see you become a Catholic Christian before I died. God has lavished his gifts on me in that respect, for I know that you have even renounced happiness here on earth to be his servant. So what am I doing here?"<sup>27</sup>

Monica's joy and passion was deeply rooted in the desire to see her son become a servant of God's and it satisfied her greatly when she believed that this gift had been bestowed on her by God. According to the Confessions of St. Augustine, his mother Monica died in Ostia on November 13, 387 possibly of malaria as a happy and satisfied woman<sup>28</sup>.

### **Continuing Education and Youth**

Moving from Thagaste to Madaura to become a student of Rhetoric transformed Augustine into a candidate for great intellectual pursuits and accomplishments. Although he returned home at sixteen for financial reasons and his father passed the following year,

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<sup>26</sup> "The Confessions of Saint Augustine, by Saint Augustine," accessed April 29, 2016, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> "The Confessions of Saint Augustine, by Saint Augustine," accessed April 29, 2016, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> "Augustine's Mother - 01 | St Augustine of Hippo | Order of St Augustine," accessed April 30, 2016, <http://augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=52>.

his mother made sure he returned to his studies in which he fully excelled. While studying Rhetoric in Madaura, he learned Latin and loved it, however his tutors were mainly pagans and may have also influenced him significantly. He enjoyed the classical literary works in Latin and some Greek as well. Many of the works he read however were by pagan authors including the works of Cicero and Virgil. Reading these works influence his thought and writings. He even began to imbibe much of the philosophical thoughts of Cicero which can be credited for igniting his own quest for wisdom. Later in 371, he moved to Carthage to continue his study in advanced Rhetoric.

The year he had been away from school opened him up to much vice. He was a seventeen year old with a lot of time in his hands and recently the lost his father. He made some friends and they explored all sorts of adolescent misbehavior and sexual explorations which he counted in the Confessions, Book Two<sup>29</sup>. He decried many of the things they did while the whole time pondering what could be responsible for such needless vileness. He would later write and describe an incidence when he and his friends went into a neighbor's garden and destroyed the unripe pears hanging on the tree just for fun. He noted that they were neither hungry nor the pears ready to eat. He also noted that they had their own pear trees to eat from that were ripe and edible but they opted to destroy every single fruit on the neighbor's pear tree just to impress one another. Later in his works on the original sin, this specific incident and a few others later may have influenced his arrival at the conclusion that inherent within the human framework is the very nature of sin which descended from the original sin.

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret R Miles, "The Erotic Text: Augustine's Confessions," *Continuum* (St. Xavier College (Chicago, IL)) 2, no. 1 (1992): 132–149.

His relationship with his friends and their sexual exploration was not explicit enough to show that he was only referring to heterosexual escapades. Could they have also explored less desirable forms of sexual exploration too sinister to bring up in his writings? While the lack of specificity on the type of sexual relations they explored is not compelling enough to suggest it included both heterosexual and homosexual encounters, it is possible that this was where the suspicion of homosexuality began for Augustine. The main takeaway here however is the fact that he became quite sexually aware and the experiences of this period in his life would probably shape his understanding of affections, love and lust going forward. To what extent this translates to having gay tendencies remains to be seen.

Augustine's education continued in Carthage for three years and he completed his studies in Rhetoric which would have equipped him with oratorical skills, the ability to communicate effectively through speech and writing. Having excelled in his studies, the opportunities for a young educated North African was boundless. Now he could become an office with the Roman government, or he could go on to study Law or any other professional discipline. His affinity for rhetoric and the arts propelled him to pursue a teaching career in this field of study. He moved back to Thagaste and where he took a teaching job in 374<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> "His Education | St Augustine of Hippo | Order of St Augustine," accessed April 30, 2016, <http://augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=66>.

### Career Life

Upon his return to Thagaste, Augustine's education gave him the edge to become one of the important men in town. He diligently focused on his teaching but also meddled with some of the religious and philosophical principles he picked up from Carthage. However, he did not merely pick up principles from his college days but had shacked up with a woman describe only as his 'concubine'. He lived with her, they were sexually active and the union produced a son they named Adeodatus 372 which translates to "given by God" in Latin. Augustine's concubine lived with him for fourteen years. The relationship started in Carthage the year 372 and ended in the year 383 in Milan. The institution he began in Thagaste was no longer suitable for him after two years in existence. He decided to move back to Carthage with his family and started a new school where he taught rhetoric. In the meantime, his relation with his nameless concubine continued, in his Confession, he frequently tried to describe the relationship as one of sexual convenience and not necessarily love. He seemed to have relished being with her but it appeared he carefully avoided suggesting the idea that he was in love with her<sup>31</sup>.

His mother was horrified by his choice to live with a woman he was not married to. She understood it to have been caused by his rather overt desire for sexual pleasure and frequently warned him about the dangers of living promiscuously. According to his Confessions, he remained faithful to his concubine while they lived together. Yet, he would not refrain from inserting that moving to Carthage was his personal sexual revolution because the city represented the melting pot of negative and evil affections.

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<sup>31</sup> David F Kelly, "Sexuality and Concupiscence in Augustine," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1983): 81–116.

The extent to which this notion can be taken remains a mystery. Is it possible the one of the evil affections in Carthage included homosexual notions? This remains unclear but the lack of deep affections for his concubine, the refusal to marry the lady despite living with her for fourteen years speak volumes about his possible sexual preferences.

One clue to the reason he did not marry the unnamed concubine was because of socio-cultural issues surrounding marriages in fourth century Numidia. The most popular explanation is that due to the class system, Augustine's class was different from his concubine's therefore they could not marry either for social reasons. Depending on her class in society, it might be illegal for them to get married<sup>32</sup>. In such situations, cohabitations such as this was legally allowed and even recognized by the Church. However, there could be other unknown reasons why this situation remained. It is possible that his lack of faith in Christ blocked his capacity to see things differently despite pressure from his mother.

While in Carthage, Augustine had embraced Manicheanism<sup>33</sup>. He remained with this sect for at least nine years. Manicheanism's main doctrine was the dualism which suggests that there was an ongoing fight between the spiritual world of light (or good) and the material world of darkness (or evil) and that light is gradually being pushed away from material substances back to the light or spiritual reality where it came from. It was a confusing religion founded by an Iranian names Mani. He was fiercely challenged and the entire movement in North Africa later purportedly stopped forcefully by the Roman Empire.

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<sup>32</sup> Miles, "The Erotic Text."

<sup>33</sup> "The Manichee - 02 | St Augustine of Hippo | Order of St Augustine," accessed April 26, 2016, <http://augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=1245&iParentid=74>.

After eight years in Carthage, he moved with his family to Rome in 383 where he was reunited with friends from Thagaste particularly Alypius<sup>34</sup>. The following year the family moved to Milan and in 385, his mother joined him and was quite determined to arrange a wife for him. To this end, they had to send the concubine back to North Africa while the son Adeodatus remained. To Monica, finding the right wife for Augustine would finally seal his place in the upper echelon of society. But things take another turn as his friend Alypius dissuaded him from marrying. He argued that getting married would weigh down his capacity to present his new philosophical ideas to the budding North African elite. Alypius himself, though from a very influential home in Thagaste and an accomplished lawyer, did not marry but was given to his career.

### **Conversion**

While in Milan, Augustine became appointed the professor of rhetoric to the Imperial Court in 383. It was not a very challenging assignment so in his spare time, he took to reading the Bible and began to appreciate it. He also started attending church though his primary motive was to observe Bishop Ambrose prolific style of preaching. Unbeknownst to him, the Gospel started filling his thoughts increasingly and after a conversation with a visiting North African, he learned about the community life of Christian believers and how they live victoriously over the flesh while yielding to God for astounding accomplishments. This bothered him greatly that with all his education, it was apparent that he could not control his flesh meanwhile; people with no education

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<sup>34</sup> "Alypius - 01 | St Augustine of Hippo | Order of St Augustine," accessed April 30, 2016, <http://augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=196>.

whatsoever are making it into heaven. He reached out to his friend Alypius and together they went to a garden to ponder this matter. At this point he was broken. He picked up his bible and opened to Rom. 13:13-14 and at this point he knew it was over, he could not resist God any longer. He surrendered his heart and became saved. His friend Alypius also got saved that day and they rushed off to tell Monica. The following year they were baptized by Bishop Ambrose of Milan. The rest of his life became devoted to God. First he had taken a leave of absence from work to study the Bible better, but after his conversion he resigned from the prestigious position and preferred to develop his faith in God for the rest of his life<sup>35</sup>.

Augustine would end up writing many theological papers that became popular and still the foundation for many Christian doctrines that nearly all traditions embrace. There is no church tradition that has not been influenced by the brilliant mind God gave to this man for His Church. He will therefore remain one of the most influential figures in Christendom for all time.

### **Conclusion**

Yes, Augustine's life presents us with so much information most of which is quite useful and encouraging and God-honoring. He was instrumental to stopping many heretical forces that would have done serious damage to the Church had they not been stopped. He was indeed a thinker and his development is clearly traceable to his childhood, parenthood and humble beginnings. Like most young people, his fallenness and curiosity got the best of him and caused him to dabble into wrong ideologies, into

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<sup>35</sup> "The Confessions of Saint Augustine, by Saint Augustine."



sensualities and fleshly proclivities some of which are too racy to mention. Yet, he managed to faithfully maintain a relationship with concubine for fourteen years. He must have been determined to outdo his father by being faithful to his concubine. Yet, his account of his life in Carthage constantly refers to the city as the place of carnal pleasures or illicit loves which presents some difficulty as to how these are to be construed.

Should one view these notions as mere references to his relationship with his concubine or something more? Despite the firm clarity that his concubine was a woman who bore his child, were there other concubines? The fourth century Roman Empire was well known for sexual explorations—it was considered a part of the enlightenment for the elite in some cases. The culture was such that married men could keep male concubines outside of their marriages without any legal infractions because the notion of concubines was not limited to having female partners. Did Augustine partake in any of these possible ‘norms’ of the society among nonbelievers? When his sexual consciousness became a reality in Thagaste between the ages of sixteen and seventeen, he explored various sexual proclivities, was there any special affection between him and one of his male friends? Could this explain why he did not marry his concubine or at least make the move to marry someone else before his mother came up with the arrangements?

Indeed, St. Augustine’s account of his own life leaves more questions than answers but one thing is quite clear—the impact of his father’s lifestyle. The void it left in him may have remained an unresolved issue throughout his life. To make things worse, his father passed away when he was about to be confronted with manhood. And shortly after, his sexuality exploded. So it would seem that his sexuality became a coping mechanism for the void his father left. It is also possible that the decrying of sexuality

and uncleanness resulted from finding that sex only brought temporary gratification but never really satisfies deeply. Another incident that raises questions is the ease with which Alypius was able to convince him to give up the idea of marriage despite his mother's efforts to find him a wife. Although the given reason has to do with intellectual pursuits seem plausible, it is quite unsatisfying. What would a probe into his friendship with Alypius reveal? Were they lovers in some sense?

Having asked all these questions, there is no telling what could potentially come of them if somehow all the answers are given. Yet, it is not clear that even with all the answers, we would be able to conclusively determine whether Augustine practiced gay sex prior to his conversion. The beauty of analytical inquiry is that it doesn't always arrive at the expected conclusions but intrinsic to the exercise itself is the possibility that other discoveries be made that would advance the course of deeper understanding of the issues under exploration. Therefore, in this case, while we can lay to rest the notion that St. Augustine was not a homosexual based on available historical facts, he was a broken man prior to his conversion and probably still struggled with his flesh even with the gift of gradual sanctification the Yahweh bestows to all who have His Spirit. Hence, for all intents and purposes, this paper concludes that Augustine of Hippo was not gay but clearly has some unresolved issues.

Throughout his professional life following his conversion and baptism, Augustine goes on to become one of the foremost theologians of his time. His prolific writings have laid the building blocks upon which much of the systematic theology in use by many Christian traditions is built. Despite these wonderful achievements, there is adequate reason to surmise that his inability to make connections between unmet needs and life

experiences may have impacted his theological positions. Augustine is not alone in the trend of significant sway of unmet needs and unresolved issues upon their biblical positions but this is quite evident in the lives of many founding fathers who have tremendously blazed the trail of biblical interpretations. Their lives, as with their works, were all impacted by the extent of the unmet needs they had to grapple with—it is quite plausible that some of their theological positions were deeply influenced by those unmet needs. These continue to impact the ways of life of various Christian traditions today as a result of their biblical views, faith life and communal living.

Unmet needs and unresolved issues can have very debilitating effects on people. People's quality of life and ability to attain full potentials can be seriously hampered by unmet needs and unresolved issues. Therefore, proper identification, classification and resolution are essential for eliminating the blockages it causes in order to improve one's capacity to live fully, richer lives. In addition to well-known religious solution of prayer and meditation, counseling and therapy sessions have produced great results as well. Ultimately, God's providence governs all things and while many can be helped by various methods to find some form of resolution to their unmet needs, God often uses the unmet needs to address deeper spiritual issues that potentially lead to much more fruitfulness in one's spiritual life.

For further clarification, the theological foundations of the project will help by shedding light on the systematic interpretation of both doctrinal and theological perceptions as they relate to unmet needs and unresolved issues.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

The theological mandate for unmet needs is exemplified in the myriad of ways by which God reveals God's self to human-kind in the midst of our circumstances. God's self-revelation, in the midst of our unmet needs and unresolved issues, positions God as the One who serves as the ultimate "need-meeting Deity" who sees our conditions, hears our cries and meets us at our particular points of need.

People of faith frequently experience unmet needs and unresolved issues in diverse ways. Many times, these unmet needs and unresolved issues can be seen to fuel deeper devotions and faith commitments in ways that nothing else could. And conversely, they can just as well erode faith sometimes as a result of unrealized expectations. The natural human instinct is such that it is constantly looking to resolve felt-needs by reaching out to a higher power in many cases. Therefore, people of faith, including Christians, often need to have a subjective theological understanding of their unmet needs and unresolved issues as they seek the intervention of God who is always present and meets us at our point of need. This is probably important mainly in the way it helps believers cope with the various challenges they face, but it can also be a way of advancing and preserving some of the most critical tenets of their faith. In light of this, the way a Christian understands his/her unmet needs and unresolved issues largely

determines his/her ability to be open to the ways in which God can intervene in the midst of their situation.

The bible is replete with examples of how God self-reveals in the midst of unmet needs. Biblically speaking, it would seem that the examples that project God's interaction with Bible characters regarding their unmet needs and unresolved issues abound. There are just too many to pick from. The more one views biblical characters with the lens of unmet needs and unresolved issues, the clearer the roles those unmet needs and unresolved issues play in their portrayal of the God-human relationship will begin to unfold. Even more critical to the unfolding of God's self-revelation in times of need is the theological perspective, which, in contemporary times must be inclusive by consulting other systems of theological interpretation. The motif of unmet needs and unresolved issues was pretty much set from the beginning and continues to pan out throughout the rest of the biblical narrative and probably lays the foundation for God's self-revelation at various instances as the ultimate "need-meeting Deity".

In the second creation story found in Genesis 2: 8-17 God reveals God's self to be present in our everyday lives. God makes the first man, placed him in the garden to attend to it, and to bring forth fruit. Because of God's creation, the question of, "Why do I exist?" is revealed<sup>1</sup>. Not only does Adam become an equal partner, he is given the responsibility and accountability to produce, "Not just to till the ground but to keep the planet productive."<sup>2</sup> De La Torre, helps us to understand how as God reveals God's self

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<sup>1</sup> Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis: Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis: Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

to Adam we must understand that his having to work the garden was not a source of punishment but rather a revelation of the responsibility that we have to work to produce our fruit for living. He states, “to imagine an idyllic world absent of work contradicts the biblical text...humans were intended to labor, not to sit idly and simply pick fruit whenever they were hungry. Work is not a curse, regardless of what we may think.”<sup>3</sup>

In her book “Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite women in context”, Carol Meyers, a feminist theologian, suggests that one of the ways the first couple understood God was the agrarian nature of their immediate context. She contends that while mainstream interpretations follow the usual patriarchal traditions, the agrarian context of work was intended for both Adam and Eve not Adam alone as most interpreters would suggest<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, to Meyers, God’s self-revelation begins as the source of all things to the first humans should not be overstated as an endorsement of the elevation of one gender over another. Maddox, further asserts that interpretations of the creation narrative, specifically, the creation of humans have been unmistakably patriarchist which often leads to oppressive and discriminative trends. Yet, more critical views, particularly what he calls the “liberated biblical feminist” view opens up a more worthwhile approach to understanding God’s self-revelation to humankind<sup>5</sup>.

Abraham and his wife might have been secretly suffering the social scorn of childlessness in Haran, which, even among the most loving of kindred always finds

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<sup>3</sup> Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis: Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 48.

<sup>4</sup> Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (OUP USA, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Randy L Maddox, “The Word of God and Patriarchalism: A Typology of the Current Christian Debate,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 14, no. 3 (September 1987): 197–216.

expressions in undue stigmatization that endlessly remind them of their hopelessness. This would appear to fit properly with the ideology behind liberation theology which suggests Christianity is essentially built upon the foundation of deliverance of the oppressed from the oppressor—an ideology made popular by James H. Cone in his book “A Black Theology of Liberation”. In his preface to the 1970 edition of this aforementioned book, Cone summarizes what liberation theology speaks to, “[i]t is my contention that Christianity is essentially a religion of liberation. The function of theology is that of analyzing the meaning of that liberation for the oppressed so they can know that their struggle for political, social, and economic justice is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ”<sup>6</sup>.

For Cone, systematic theology should be interpreted in terms of the hope that liberation holds forth to the oppressed and any other theological construct lacking this key factor would not suffice because this liberation is essentially the good news Jesus Christ brought into the world. In line with this thinking, it is perhaps applicable that Abraham and Sarah’s visitation from God can be viewed as both a liberation and a panacea to their insurmountable challenge. It certainly can be viewed as the consummation of freedom in a number of obvious ways. While Cone’s main treatment of liberation theology implicitly focuses on the global struggles of the Black race using the United States as its case study, it is possible to spread this thinking to cover other equally debilitating areas of the human struggle. Could it be that God was indeed demonstrably displaying the main character of His interaction with humanity after the fall through the liberation of Abraham from something as seemingly simple as barrenness? Is it possible

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<sup>6</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Orbis Books, 1970).

that Abraham's unmet need and unresolved issue became the foreground for God's gracious interjection that disrupts the oppressiveness of unmet needs and unresolved issues thereby setting the stage for the liberation gospel? Indeed Cone's positing that the Christian ideology falls apart when it precludes a solution for the racial oppression of Whites against Blacks has strong unquestionable merits. However, it is possible that for the true beauty of this view of systematic theology to shine brightly, it has to extend its reach beyond racial prejudices to encompass all human injustices and oppressiveness as the overarching human defect it aims to address and eliminate through the liberation of the oppressed.

In her book, *Survival and Liberation*, Carroll A. Watkins Ali, speaks about the unique experiences of African American women. On the one hand, Black women experienced and endured physical and psychological punishment from Black men. However, on the other hand, the approach to talking about the specific unmet needs and unresolved issues left out the unique experiences of Black Women's experience of gender bias as well<sup>7</sup>. This unique experience caused Sojourner Truth to posit the question, "Ain't I a Woman?"<sup>8</sup> To this end, a biblical approach to point believers to God for relief positions them to embrace God as the liberator, who redeems the oppressed from their oppressors.

Sojourner's question was an invitation to both Black and White women to come together to fight for the rights of women. Yet, the White women, continued to

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<sup>7</sup> Dr Carroll Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, Unabridged edition. (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 1997).



discriminate against Black women. God revealed God's self to Black women through their embracing their culture and heritage as they continued to strive for freedom and justice. As they fled for their safety and a better life, they never left the children behind. Consequently, Ali states, "Black women escaped to freedom along with Black men and formulated a plan for the whole family to follow."<sup>9</sup> The reality of Black women was the metaphor of a mule or mules carrying the world, "carrying the whole country on their backs."<sup>10</sup> In the midst of their unmet needs and unresolved issues, Black women served a God that revealed God's Self as one who gathers. Black women have been the gatherers and keepers of family and greatly responsible for the stability of the family in the midst of slavery, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and even until now. Of none, this pivotal role that Black women have played has been on the basis of their theological grounding of the God who liberates, delivers, provides and definitely capable of resolving unresolved issues.

To Abraham, his wife's barrenness and their childlessness possibly eroded any other accomplishments in other areas of their lives because of how highly having an heir was valued within Mesopotamian society. God came and introduced faith to them by giving them an open-ended instruction with promises. They could have rejected the offer and maintained the status-quo but Abraham and his wife chose to believe and obey God and as we would see within the biblical narrative, they indeed received all the blessings God promised. He indeed gave them beauty for ashes (Isa. 61:3).

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<sup>9</sup> Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, Unabridged edition. (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, Unabridged edition. (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 1997).

The LORD God's proclamation to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and the one that curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3) was a direct response to their unmet need. God's initial pronouncement of blessings is now beginning to include others within and outside of Abraham's sphere of influence. The first observation was that of a pact with God with the advantage that anyone who treated him favorably would be treated likewise by God and anyone who harbored ill-will against him would attract God's wrath. By every standard, this aspect of God's promises to Abraham poses some challenges. The most daunting challenge may have been how Abraham understood what God was saying contextually. Between Sarah and Abraham, they must have wondered why God singled them out for all these blessings. Yet, they simply accepted in faith not knowing how it was all going to come to pass.

McFarland wrestles with two interesting viewpoints for understanding Abraham's situation. One viewpoint suggests that God reached to Abraham of Chaldea in order to initiate Self-revelation which is why Abraham was required to relocate to a different geographical location<sup>11</sup>. The journey therefore became symbolic to Abraham and Sarah's incremental knowledge of the nature of God. The other viewpoint suggests that it was a case of God's grace and election that brought about all the covenant promises God makes to Abraham and Sarah. What both viewpoints seemed to ignore however, is the fact that God's self-revelation and gracious election were presented to Abraham and Sarah in light of their unmet need and unresolved issues. No doubt, God's sovereign purposes were at

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<sup>11</sup> Orrey McFarland, "Whose Abraham, Which Promise?: Genesis 15.6 in Philo's *De Virtutibus* and Romans 4," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35, no. 2 (December 2012): 107–129.

work in this scenario, yet Abraham and Sarah's comprehension of the interaction must have something to do with their unmet need of childlessness.

In Genesis 15, Abraham's life has been transformed significantly. God's promises have caused him to flourish in the new land where he now lived. Abraham and Sarah had become very wealthy and significantly influential in the region. They possessed gold, silver, livestock and landed property. They also had servants and probably could afford to live in some degree of luxury. In addition, it would be fair to assume his knowledge of God had also increased significantly. Abraham seemed to have everything he wanted but he was still lacking a biological son, an heir to all the greatness God had endowed him with. Against this backdrop, God speaks to him in Gen.15:1 "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great", to which Abraham responds in v.2 "...O LORD God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Abraham adds some emphasis to his protest in v.3, "...You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." To which God responds with reassuring words that the promise to give them an offspring remains true despite the delay.

Although Fidler wrestles with the unity of themes within the Abrahamic narrative but ultimately points out that a pre-exilic or exilic view "argue that trust in the divine promise (v.6) is perfectly in harmony with requesting a pledge in (v.8) or to justify the position of v.6 as the condition for possessing the land, modeled in Deuteronomist land theology.<sup>12</sup>" Hence, Fidler suggests the theological view of promise and its fulfillment on the basis of trust, which, by inference means that both Abraham and Sarah saw God in

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<sup>12</sup> Ruth Fidler, "Genesis XV: Sequence and Unity," *Vetus testamentum* 57, no. 2 (2007): 166.

this light. God comes to them in their need, makes them a promise and fulfills it by first of all, aligning all the requisite conditions, and that is the root of grace theology.

Abraham's protest to God may be indicative of an internal struggle that was stirred up when God repeated His promise of blessings. At this point of Abraham's life, there is no doubt that God had repeatedly proven Himself to be reliable as far as promise-keeping goes. In his work on Genesis 15:1-18, Buttrick suggests that the text was about God's freedom to perform His promise on His own terms, "the whole passage can be read as a story of God, the free covenant-making God who chooses humanity to be a partner people. So we will read the passage in between creation and fulfillment as an event happening within the good purposes of God<sup>13</sup>."

In other words, Abraham's tantrum was not going to compel God to change His timetable for its fulfillment. In the context of Abraham's unmet need and unresolved issue, he needed to know God as One who is faithful to keep His promises according to His own terms. This seems to be a very crucial lesson for Abraham to learn as it lays the foundation for understanding God's sovereignty even having to experience some unmet needs and unresolved issues. Despite all the blessings Abraham and Sarah had experience to this point, his reaction to God's reassurance showed that his deepest unresolved need could not be assuaged by anything else.

Even his prosperity and wealth, victory against enemy forces and protection for his household which are clear indications of God's favor, were not enough to fill the gap created by his childlessness. And this reveals the very nature of unmet needs and unresolved issues, namely, that in many cases, anything other than the desired solution is

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<sup>13</sup> David G. Buttrick, "Genesis 15:1-18," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 393-397.

a temporary fix. “Hope deferred make the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12). Perhaps the reason for the delay in Abraham’s case was for him to arrive at the moment where he believed God from the heart rather than merely assenting to His words. From the subsequent set of verses, God responds by dismissing Abraham’s fears. He takes him outside to the starry night and urges him to count the stars indicating that his offspring was going to be very numerous (Gen. 15:5). In other words, Abraham needed to know that having a successor was a minor thing to God, His plans were much bigger than that. But there was something even more pertinent at this point of their relationship; it was critical that despite Abraham’s unmet need, he must demonstrate his unconditional trust in God<sup>14</sup>.

This was essential because it is quite possible that if Abraham received the children he and his wife so longed for, their focus on God stand the risk of being set in the back burner. Therefore, God demonstrated his determination to be a blessing to Abraham and his wife even in the area of their greatest need. I believe this is why in Gen. 15:6 “...Abraham believed the LORD, and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness”. This needed to happen, we learn in Hebrews 11: 6 that “...without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever will approach Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him..” Abraham needed to arrive at the place where He believed God more than he believed his unmet need and unresolved issues<sup>15</sup>. This is who God is in unmet needs and unresolved issues, He must be more real to us than the

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<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “God’s Covenant with Abraham,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56 (2013): 249–271.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel A Klein, “Who Counted Righteousness to Whom?: Two Clashing Views by Shadal on Genesis 15:6,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (January 2008): 28–32.

biggest challenges we face. Romer, in his work on Abraham's Righteousness suggests that the righteousness recorded in Gen.15:6 is attributable to God and not Abraham<sup>16</sup>. He argues that whereas the reckoning of righteousness in Gen.15:6 was an imputation of righteousness from God to Abraham rather than a righteousness that was received through the merit of faith.

Although Romer's position seem to contradict most Christian traditions which uphold 'believing' or 'faith' as the grounds of justification in Christ, the more important issue is the necessity of righteousness in any dealings with God. According to Romans 3:6, "just as Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness", the more pertinent matter is the fact that Abraham was reckoned righteous before God, whether it was as a result of faith merit or simply a gracious bestowal from God for believing Him, is of a lesser consequence. The more critical issue is the matter of who God is to us in the midst of our unmet needs and unresolved issues. Clearly, from the Abrahamic narrative that includes the imputation of righteousness by God, the most important observation is that his relationship with God became deeper, and it is safe to add that the relationship became stronger. Therefore, although unmet needs and unresolved issues are debilitating naturally speaking, they can also be viewed as the platform for reaching a higher understanding of whom God is to us.

Another Biblical figure that would help further stress the place of unmet needs and unresolved issues in the lives of people as they relate to God is the unnamed woman of Samaria according to the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. In this tale told by Apostle

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Römer, "Abraham's Righteousness and Sacrifice: How to Understand (and Translate) Genesis 15 and 22," *Communio viatorum* 54, no. 1 (2012): 3–15.

John, Jesus and his disciples were on a journey to Galilee, they made a stop by Jacob's well at Sychar (a town in Samaria), and while the disciples went off to buy food, Jesus had the most interesting encounter with the nameless woman of Samaria. According to John 4:7-30, the Samaritan woman came to fetch water and Jesus asked her for some water to drink and a conversation ensued. Seeing that this was a rather unusual request, the Samaritan was taken aback but respectfully declined the request, explaining that the Jews do not normally have any dealings with Samaritans. But Jesus, ignoring the usual social tension between Jews and Samaritans, explained that if she knew who he was, she would be the one asking, and would receive "living water". Apparently not understanding what Jesus was alluding to, she jeered, saying, "You have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" (v.11).

The Samaritan woman described in John is a woman of questionable morals. She is guilty of aberrant sexual behavior by the community, most likely falsely, simply because Jesus understood that she had no husband and had been divorced five times. It did not matter to Jesus how others who imported their judgment into the text. Jesus never judged her circumstances. He did not refer to her as a tramp or by other derogative names. Rather, his conversation with the woman revealed the reality that Jesus sees and knows all things.<sup>17</sup>

Jesus shows himself as a boundary breaker. He spoke with a woman who was from Samaria in a time and era where it was taboo for a Jew to speak with a Samaritan. Yet, as Gail R. O'Day points out, "He (Jesus) breaks open boundaries in his conversation

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<sup>17</sup> Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition: Revised and Updated*, 3rd Anniversary edition. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 384.

with the Samaritan woman; the boundary between male and female, the boundary between ‘chosen people’ and ‘rejected people’ Jesus’ journey to Samaria and his conversation with the woman demonstrates that the grace of God that he offers is available to all.<sup>18</sup> Many women called to ministry who are bound by traditional rules of the church that places women in lesser roles especially as it relates to leadership, are assured, through this revelation that in God there is neither male nor female. In this case, not only is God revealed as being all knowing, but rather inclusive and ready to tear down boundaries.

After she heard Jesus make this compelling statement, she was convinced what he was saying had something to do with the Messiah’s coming and his revelation of all things. Jesus responded to her saying, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you”. In other words Jesus affirmed to the Samaritan woman that he was the Messiah. Clearly, to the woman at the well in Sychar of Samaria, whose life is riddled with unmet needs and unresolved issues, Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah, the living water that eternally satisfies all the longings and dissatisfactions of this life. Whereas she had lived with herself, become quite adjusted to her situation, and decidedly lived in acceptance of her lot in life without any real closure, resolution or satisfaction, Jesus, the God-man comes along and illumines her eyes to see that He alone can fill the gaping void in her life.

While discussing the symbolism of water in the Fourth Gospel, Sherri Brown did not give any emphasis to the unmet need of the Samaritan woman. Rather she focused on the evangelistic value of the encounter by pointing to who Jesus turned to be to her. She

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<sup>18</sup> Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds., *Women’s Bible Commentary, Third Edition: Revised and Updated*, 3rd Anniv ed. edition. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 384.



writes “although the woman makes no verbal acceptance of Jesus’ revelation, she does, like many disciples before her, leave her belongings and earthly responsibilities where they lay and run to share her message.”<sup>19</sup> While this is a true and worthwhile observation, perhaps if a little more attention is paid to her situation before the revelation of Jesus would infinitely elevate the value of her discovery. While her encounter with Jesus can probably be ranked with that of the other disciples, the striking distinctive with the Samaritan was that she was not simply called in the usual fashion. She was addressed from the vantage point of her unmet need. Therefore, it is safe to infer that her understanding and reception of the Christ was helped along by the backdrop of her unmet need and unresolved issues<sup>20</sup>. The Messianic revelation and encounter would ever remain personal to her. This is reflected in her testimony to her neighbors when she said “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” v.29.

Paul Scott Wilson, in his treatment of John 4:7-30, concludes that love is the main point of this encounter. His assessment of the Samaritan’s life provided the clue that she was needy—there a number of things that could lead one to go through that number of men, and none of them is positive. However, the apex of it all was the need for love, according to Wilson. “Is not that the deepest longing in all of us, to be known and loved, to hear the words, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you,” and to have the reality of

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<sup>19</sup> Sherri Brown, “Water Imagery and the Power and Presence of God in the Gospel of John,” *Theology Today (Online)* 72, no. 3 (October 2015): 289–298.

<sup>20</sup> Peter J Scaer, “Jesus and the Woman at the Well: Where Mission Meets Worship,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (January 2003): 3–18.

God made present?<sup>21</sup>” Wilson is probably right because the lack of recognition and affection can leave very deep wounds. For the Samaritan, marrying multiple times did not resolve that need, it is highly likely that things got worse with each attempt which possibly explains why she was not married to her current mate. But her encounter with Jesus changed it all. Her need became the springboard for her encountering God.

Dr. Marian Ronan was more interested in the perception of the Woman at the well. Her well-founded concern about the traditionally negative portrayal of the Samaritan woman was addressed to some detail in her work titled “Woman at the Well”. According to her, this “...interpretive tradition also teaches that the woman went to the well in the middle of the day because she was ashamed to encounter other women because of her adultery. But this reading makes no sense at all; why would she not have met other women in the middle of the day?<sup>22</sup>” She adds that it is quite possible that she made multiple trips because she had multiple uses for water that one trip would not cover. Gench, in her book titled “*Back to the well: Women’s encounters with Jesus in the Gospels*” further develops this idea by stating that “not only did she engage in a robust conversation with Jesus that was back and forth, unlike Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, she brought the whole community to the Lord.<sup>23</sup>”

While Ronan’s effort at refuting the negative portrayal of the Samaritan woman, it is not necessary to belabor her social status as if to make excuses for her. Neither is it fair

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Scott Wilson, “Living Water in John 4:7-30,” *Ex auditu* 30 (2014): 165–167.

<sup>22</sup> Marian Ronan, “Woman at the Well,” *The Living Pulpit (Online)* 18, no. 2 (April 2009), accessed March 30, 2016, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tfh&AN=ATLA0001981432&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>23</sup> Frances Taylor Gench, *Back to the Well: Women’s Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels* (Louisville: WJK, 2004), 112–113.

to overstate her condition as some interpretive reading often do, but what is of issue is the fact that she clearly had unmet needs that needed to be satisfied. Notably, she did not go about telling strangers her problem, she hid it well but Jesus clearly demonstrated that nothing can be hidden from him. It is also remarkable that after the encounter, she was free to tell everyone that she found a man who told her everything she ever did. Hence, her needy circumstances that Jesus exposed mainly for providing the solution, was necessary to magnify the beauty of her encounter.

In 2 Cor. 12:7-9, Apostle Paul had a challenge he described as a thorn in his flesh and a messenger of Satan. In other words, he had an unmet need and/or unresolved issue. He gave a reason for the problem, “therefore, to keep me from being too elated...” v.7b. In essence, the Apostle believed this unmet need had a purpose in his life, namely, to keep him humble and protect him from becoming prideful. He also notes what he’s done about it as follows, “three times I appealed to the Lord about this that it would leave me...” v.8 indicating it had been a matter of prayer for him. He had been seeking the Lord about this unmet need but the answer he gets is interesting, “...but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” v.9. Paul identifies he has a need, describing it simply as a thorn in the flesh or a messenger of Satan. He does what any good Christian would do about it which is to pray—and he persist in prayer. He gets a response that essentially says that the solution to this problem is no solution at all. Paul only needed to view his need differently, in light of the response he received.

The passage would seem very straight forward but its interpretation has been a source of hermeneutical contention among traditions<sup>24</sup>. Various explanations have been offered to explain what Paul meant by the “thorn in the flesh” and “a messenger of Satan”. On one hand, they are viewed as metaphors, and on another, they are viewed as one metaphor (thorn in the flesh) one literal (messenger of Satan)<sup>25</sup>. In light of the immersive nature of Paul’s letters in which he intends for his readers to experience his testimonies or witnessing, it is safe to say that the most important part of the passage is the relatability of his need. It is fairly true to characterize Christianity by stating that many prayer go unanswered. And while many theological reasons may exist for that situation, some can definitely be likened to Paul’s situation. Therefore, unmet needs and unresolved issues are realities that should not be viewed strangely in the Christian faith. “Although Paul sees his thorn as an attack from Satan designed to inflict pain, he also sees it as a gift of God with a salutary purpose. He detects the hand of God, as well as the hand of Satan, behind his affliction.<sup>26</sup>” Paul notes that due to the abundance of revelation, he was “given” a thorn in the flesh...which is indicative of the fact that he viewed it as gift from God to keep him from becoming prideful. Therefore, his construal of the unmet need is that he needed it to keep him humble. Therefore, it is safe to surmise that God reveals Himself to us the way he chooses in the context of our need. And the solution to that need frequently becomes the deepening of our trust in Him.

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<sup>24</sup> Janet Everts Powers, “A ‘Thorn in the Flesh’: the Appropriation of Textual Meaning,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 9, no. 1 (2001): 85–99.

<sup>25</sup> David Abernathy, “Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh: A Messenger of Satan?,” *Neotestamentica* 35, no. 1–2 (2001): 69–79.

<sup>26</sup> S. H. T. Page, “Satan : God’s Servant,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 3 (2007): 449–465.

### **Conclusion**

Unmet needs and unresolved issues are ubiquitous to the human experience. This is a reality that can heighten our religious experience or diminish it altogether. The manner in which we are impacted by the unmet needs and unresolved issues in our lives depend largely on how we understand them and how committed we are to making the necessary adjustments. Unmet needs and unresolved issues has huge theological implications for Christian. The argument can be made that the whole biblical narrative is one of unmet needs and unresolved issues and how God's self-manifestation to us within that context.

From the outset, God created all things and saw that they were good. Humanity's disobedience led to the Fall and ever since, the human story has been that of one unmet need or the other. God comes to some biblical characters and manifests Himself to them in their need and the ultimate problem-solver. However, it gradually becomes clear that God's self-revelation follows a divine pattern—a predetermined will. When Abraham and Sarah encountered God, to them, God was simply going to do what He promised. They only needed to be obedient and trusting, and God will keep the blessings coming. After a number of years of waiting they would discover that God meets their deepest needs according to His own terms.

The woman at the well's encounter with Jesus changed her life. She found out quickly that all she had been looking for was the 'living water', that is, Jesus himself. When she discovered Jesus, she broke out in joy announcing him everywhere. Paul brings a new twist to the mix when his unmet need is viewed as a "gift" from God. His

unresolved issue was necessary to keep him humble and completely reliant on the grace of God for life and ministry.

In all, the portrayal of God in the midst of unmet needs and unresolved issues should lead to one conclusion, namely, that God is who/what we all need. And how this reality manifests itself in anyone's life determines how they encounter the Living Water and as it wells up within them to eternal life.

While the theological foundations sheds light on the systematic interpretation of both doctrinal and theological perceptions of unmet needs and unresolved issues, theoretical foundations would outline the core concepts that formed the basis for understanding unmet needs and unresolved issues.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Most of the institutions common to people take the issue of leadership success quite seriously. The added layer of unmet needs and unresolved issues among leaders further heightens the need for strategies, theories, principles and concepts necessary for overcoming limitations and reaching peak effectiveness as leaders. This paper will review various disciplines and discuss some of the theories they have developed to deal with dual challenge of unmet needs and unresolved issues in leadership.

Starting from various theories used by congregations, their effectiveness, their rise to dominance and their subsequent decline. This paper will analyze the strengths and weakness of those theories. Following is the discussion of the other theories and concepts that have been propounded and implemented in the fields of education, general commerce and business, sociology, psychology and then psychotherapy.

The assumptions made by the project of unmet needs and unresolved issues and its correlation with unsustainable leadership effectiveness within congregational contexts will be shown to include generalization of the prevalence of unmet needs and unresolved issues. It is fair to admit that unmet needs and unresolved issues are not necessarily universal in an academic sense. However, the project would maintain the position that unmet needs and unresolved issues is one of the banes of sustained Christian leadership.

In order to maintain a harmony of ideas, some inferences will be drawn from the theories discussed and how they would jive with unmet needs and unresolved issues within congregational contexts. Where necessary, some dialogues will be presented between peer-reviewed scholarly papers and books in manner that would invite readers to draw their own conclusions.

### **Church Theories and Strategies**

The methods of church growth have long been on the minds of church leaders since inception and there is no shortage of strategies, concepts and theories that has caught the attentions of church leaders. While many have relied on known traditional methods of leadership development and church growth, others have become increasingly less conventional. One of the most effective unconventional models is the Saddleback model largely known as “Purpose Driven”. This approach made popular by Rick Warren, took attention off the usual hierarchical structure that is common within traditional churches and focused on the discovering and fulfilling purpose.

Dr. Larry Hart, a Professor of Theology at Oral Roberts University School of Theology and Missions in his article titled “*Ministry Models of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*” highlights what he describes as the Saddleback Model as one of the notable ones. Writing about this model, he opines that “it may be the fastest growing and most influential model out there. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Lake Forest, California, unselfishly shares what he and his folks are discovering with all who are interested—including the Assemblies of God, which has adapted Warren’s model to its



own uses”<sup>1</sup>. In other words, Hart believes that the apparent success of the purpose-driven theory of church leadership and congregational growth has been successful enough to get the attention of many church leaders, to the point that some significantly large denominations have found it worthy of incorporating into their leadership and growth agendas.

In the same vein, Tim Stafford adds that “to most people, it’s just another megachurch. Only one population definitely pays attention to Saddleback: pastors. Thousands of pastors’ flock to the church’s annual Purpose Driven Ministries conferences...”<sup>2</sup> He further adds that in 2002, over 3800 pastors were in attendance which is indicative of a widespread recognition of the model’s effectiveness. It is a model for church leadership and growth that focuses attention more on expansion, growth and numerical increase as the benchmarks of successful leadership. The influence of this model on the evangelical movement is no doubt massive, but more recent assessments reveal that this model is not completely flawless. Steinbrueck argues that there has been a significant decline in the Saddleback Model because leaders are increasingly looking elsewhere for resources, “...Saddleback’s influence has begun to decline. Pastors and Christian leaders have been looking elsewhere for ideas, resources, and leadership<sup>3</sup>.”

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<sup>1</sup> Larry Hart, “Models for Ministry in the 21st Century,” *Ministry Today Magazine*, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-today-archives/66-unorganized/1478-models-for-ministry-in-the-21st-century>.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Stafford, “A Regular Purpose-Driven Guy: Rick Warren’s Genius Is in Helping Pastors See the Obvious,” *Christianity Today* 46, no. 12 (November 18, 2002): 42–48.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Steinbrueck, “Why Willow Creek and Saddleback Are Losing Influence While North Point and LifeChurch.tv Are Gaining Influence,” *Christian Web Trends Blog*, n.d., accessed December 14, 2016, <http://blog.ourchurch.com/2009/07/30/why-willow-creek-and-saddleback-are-losing-influence-while-north-point-and-lifechurchtv-are-gaining-influence/>.

While there is ample evidence that support Steinbrueck's position about the purpose-driven model of Christian leadership, he attributed it to the failure to understand and embrace the times. He basically summed up that both Saddleback and Willow Creek (a similar model) "have been slow to adopt blogging and social networking...",<sup>4</sup> among other things. However, the case can also be made that perhaps what is needed is to look inwards and clear up the clogging effects of unmet needs and unresolved issues in order for the model to be more effective. The concentric model developed by Rick Warren truly gives people the sense of being purpose-driven but over time, it comes at a cost of real personal development that marks one's spirituality<sup>5</sup>.

Another model that has also puzzled researchers is found mainly within the Black churches. The model is reasonably simple and has been branded with various descriptions. While some have called Black Theology, the coinage Black Liberation Theology is preferred by others but common to both is the juxtaposition of the Christian faith with the cultural disposition and unique experiences of most downtrodden members of the American populace<sup>6</sup>. It is the theological position and leadership development that is rooted in the liberational work of Jesus as the Messiah who came to free the oppressed from their oppressors. While many consider this as the basis for mainstream civil rights movement, the model essentially focuses on alleviating the deplorable circumstances of their communities by involving all the human, social and governmental institutions that

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Justin K. H. Tse, "Working Evangelicalisms: Deploying Fragmented Theologies in Secular Space," *The AAG Review of Books* 1, no. 2 (April 3, 2013): 92–97.

<sup>6</sup> Amy R Barbour and Marvin E Jr Wickware, "Breaking the Chains of Chattel Teamwork: The Future of Black Liberation Theology," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 64, no. 2–3 (2013): 44–51.

directly impact upon them<sup>7</sup>. One of the most unsung heroes of this model is Rev.

Youngblood, the former pastor of St. Paul's Community Baptist Church in East Brooklyn New York.

Although criticized for his non-inclusive focus on "Black Men", Youngblood truly exemplified the capacity to transform communities through bold theological constructs like Black Liberation Theology. Hunter writes that, "the story of this church and its pastor is not cited to idealize them or place them above criticism for the sake of theological reflection. They are cited precisely because, whatever their failings, their ministry evoke a stunning image, a vision even, of what the gospel "as the power of God unto salvation" might look like concretely, in the 'real world'..."<sup>8</sup>

Youngblood was devoted to the economic emancipation of his people and turned his leadership into an army of investors, educators, community developers, and lobbyists all to the end that his community experience liberation from drugs, alcoholism, poverty and high crime rates. However, as with Saddleback's model, it had its limitations and flaws. While it focused on social awakening using theological constructs, it was only a matter of time for the unmet needs, unresolved issues and unrealistic expectations to emerge and cause serious defects in the success of the leadership model. Harden suggests that "...the Black consciousness paradigm works well as a framework of Black Theology when the society needs corrective interventions and the church can engage in a collective

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<sup>7</sup> Aarian Marshall, "Churches Unusual: Worship and Broad-Based Organizing in Two Brooklyn Congregations," *International Journal of Public Theology* 6, no. 4 (January 1, 2012): 435–466.

<sup>8</sup> Rodney J Hunter, "The Power of God for Salvation: Transformative Ecclesia and the Theological Renewal of Pastoral Care and Counseling," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 25, no. 3 (1998): 54–84.

response, but it fails to provide adequate substance when the problem is pervasive, individualistic, and non-structural or non-legalistic in nature<sup>9</sup>.”

A cursory review of the successes of this model in Youngblood’s era shows that Harden’s position has some merit to it. The East Brooklyn community that housed St. Paul’s Community Baptist Church experienced a significant level of social transformation but probably did not anticipate the challenges of the emergent society that did not require as much socio-economic liberation as it did decades prior. Clearly, a newer, more progressive narrative is needed to build on the strong foundations of Black Theology and Liberation Ethic, and it is my view that it should include a collective conversation regarding unmet needs and unresolved issues.

Africa has experienced a massive growth in the evangelical and Pentecostal movement over the last few several decades. The astronomical growth of these “African-initiated Churches” is believed to be at least 50 million strong according to Ralph D. Winter in 2003<sup>10</sup>. The African church, though greatly influenced by American evangelicalism, has evolved into an indigenous flavor that essentially emphasizes reliance on God not merely for salvation but also for relief from socio-economic challenges through charismatic manifestations. Hence, to succeed as an African-indigenous church, the capacity to demonstrate God’s ability to meet needs must be one of its core values<sup>11</sup>. To this end, whereas the Western Church pursues theological

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Gawaine Harden, “Toward a Practical Black Theology and Liberation Ethic: An Alternative African-American Perspective,” *Black Theology* 9, no. 1 (April 2011): 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ralph D Winter, “The Largest Stumbling Block to Leadership Development in the Global Church,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 20, no. 3 (July 2003): 86–94.

<sup>11</sup> Katrien Pype, “The Liveliness of Pentecostal/charismatic Popular Culture in Africa” (October 16, 2014): 345–378.

intellectualism, the African church emphasizes both Pentecostal and Charismatic manifestations. This approach basically sets forth the necessary leadership model for spearheading and sustaining Charismatic component that insists on the present power of God to solve all humanistic challenges.

Since poverty accounts for the deplorable social conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa, Pentecostalism and Charismatism naturally evolved into the “God of Prosperity” movement. According to this view, God’s blessings of financial prosperity is available and obtaining for believers who live right, give out of their poverty, have enough faith and remain faithful to God<sup>12</sup>. In Obadare’s view, this theological position holds that the interaction of believers with the divine somehow produces the inevitable improvement of social and financial circumstances in their lives<sup>13</sup>. At the heart of this theological position is the biblical emphasis on the socio-economic betterment that awaits those who trust in the saving grace of the gospel.

This also constitutes the framework of their leadership models whereby church leaders are expected to embody the gospel they preach through the display of personal wealth. As a result, many very wealthy pastors have risen from Africa, yes, the poor continent of Africa. Some have their names listed among the richest pastors in the world according to Forbes<sup>14</sup>. This places tremendous pressure on the leadership to ensure that they look the part as a strategy to present the God of prosperity to potential members. It is

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Lindhardt, *Pentecostalism in Africa: Presence and Impact of Pneumatic Christianity in Postcolonial Societies* (Boston: Brill, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Ebenezer Obadare, “‘Raising Righteous Billionaires’: the Prosperity Gospel Reconsidered,” *HTS* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1–8.

<sup>14</sup> Mfonobong Nsehe, “The Five Richest Pastors In Nigeria,” *Forbes*, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2011/06/07/the-five-richest-pastors-in-nigeria/>.

basic marketing, but it ends up enriching those on the pulpit heavily while depleting members' resources<sup>15</sup>. The prosperity model has not helped produce better servant-leaders that would sustainably achieve the objectives of a congregational context, rather it is a hotbed for unrealistic expectations, unmet needs and unresolved issues.

Many other models of leadership exist among various congregational contexts. Some have turned out to be more successful than others but the common thread that runs through them all is that the leaders are first of all 'persons' or 'humans'. And being human has its spiritual, psychological and emotional contexts. These contexts conspire to form the paradigms and determinisms of each person's unique experiences in life. Buried within these experiences are eventualities that constitute unmet needs and unresolved issues. It is the aim of this paper to argue that regardless of training, if the unique, personal unmet needs and unresolved issues of a congregational leader are not addressed, the effectiveness of those trainings will be stunted. Hence, for any context to maximize its leadership strategy, it needs to take another look at psychological and emotional wellbeing of the persons saddled with the leadership responsibilities<sup>16</sup>.

### **Theories and Concepts from Other Disciplines**

In the world of business, it is quite common to find a deluge of leadership theories, concepts and models. Yet, at the core, they are similar in the objectives they are designed to accomplish. Business is all about creating value for all stakeholders and the worth of a leadership model is often determined by how effectively it can help realize the

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<sup>15</sup> Seth Dunn, "Poor Blacks and Rich Pastors," *Pulpit & Pen*, October 30, 2014, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://pulpitandpen.org/2014/10/30/poor-blacks-and-rich-pastors/>.

<sup>16</sup> Winter, "The Largest Stumbling Block to Leadership Development in the Global Church."

desired objectives<sup>17</sup>. Also, starting from the foundational principles of leadership, business experts and technocrats have sought to develop and implement contemporary derivatives that more effectively generate the desired results. One of such efforts is embodied in the book titled “Transformational and Charismatic Leadership: The Road Ahead (Monographs in Leadership and Management)”, in which the authors offer two basic, yet contemporary leadership models for business management. As the book title suggests, the first model is transformational leadership which seeks to unpack the leadership dynamics of certain leaders who “develop an emotional attachment” to their missions and stakeholders as the driving force behind performances that essentially break the norm<sup>18</sup>. This is strikingly understood to enhance the capacity to deliver effectiveness both organically and intrinsically toward greater output in the pursuit of organizational goals and objectives.

The second model Avolio offers in his book is charismatic leadership which appeals to the inherent ability to compel, motivate and drive organizations beyond exceptional performances through various processes intentionally designed to deliver outstanding results<sup>19</sup>.

While Avolio’s collective submissions on the leadership models potentially possess the right instruction for developing a specific type of leadership, they are not failure proof. As with many other business models, they are limited in diverse ways

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<sup>17</sup> John A. Lanier, *Value-Creation in Middle Market Private Equity*, New edition edition. (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Bruce J. Avolio, *Transformational and Charismatic Leadership: The Road Ahead*, ed. Francis J. Yammarino, 10th Anniversary ed edition. (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Bruce J. Avolio, *Transformational and Charismatic Leadership: The Road Ahead*, ed. Francis J. Yammarino, 10th Anniversary ed edition. (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013).

because of the constantly shifting landscape and spaces where they operate. While one concept or model delivers great results, it may not do so sustainably due to other mitigating forces. This is why some business models have included agility and pivotability as concepts that should be included in the leadership strategies of modern-day organizations<sup>20</sup>.

In fairness, these leadership models pay some attention to the psychological and emotional challenges of aspiring leaders as part of their curriculums because they have learned the value of holistic development. Hence, while they still place a high premium on intellectual prowess, psychological and mental clarity have also been identified as part of the strategy for charismatic and transformational leadership<sup>21</sup>. Organizational leadership must then not be viewed merely on the basis of academic knowledge albeit important, but also on the psychological and mental fitness that keeps the emotional channels open for a more congruent self-investment into the value-creation mission of the organization. This has increasingly become more integral to the successful implementation of leadership models especially in the current business landscape that aims at leveraging the social, organizational and governmental components toward exponential growth in various global commercial spaces<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Karan Girotra and Serguei Netessine, "Why Large Companies Struggle With Business Model Innovation," *Harvard Business Review*, last modified September 27, 2013, accessed December 17, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2013/09/why-large-companies-struggle-with-business-model-innovation>.

<sup>21</sup> Avolio, *Transformational and Charismatic Leadership*.

<sup>22</sup> "Volans\_Breakthrough-Business-Models\_Report\_Sep2016.pdf," n.d., accessed December 17, 2016, [http://volans.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Volans\\_Breakthrough-Business-Models\\_Report\\_Sep2016.pdf](http://volans.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Volans_Breakthrough-Business-Models_Report_Sep2016.pdf).



Perhaps there is somewhat of an inferential lesson here when compared with the leadership models and structures within congregational contexts and faith-based institutions. Since business leadership experts have discovered that deep knowledge of the core components of running a successful organization has become increasingly inadequate as the sole strategy for businesses, they have incorporated other disciplines that take into account other aspects of the human nature. In keeping with this, many organizations have included psychotherapists and psychologists as members of their leadership team to help build a more holistic structure that would generate optimum results to withstand the brutal business landscape.

One of the premises of this project is to highlight the fact that congregational leaderships rise and fall not for lack of great models, sound teachings or great strategies but for ignoring the obvious deficiencies brought about by psychological gaps within the personal lives of the leaders themselves. I believe that taking a page from the business models would help address the unmet needs and unresolved issues to the point that they lose their ability to prevent sustainable success within congregational leadership contexts. This is perhaps what Givens alluded to when he suggested that psychological empowerment generally leads to “transformative leadership through individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized influence.”<sup>23</sup> On one end of the spectrum, church leadership focused mainly on the spiritual, on the other end of the spectrum in modern times this focus has shifted to more natural leadership qualities. Neither has produced the kind of sustainable successes that

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<sup>23</sup> “2\_Givens Pp 188-214\_jm.pdf,” n.d., accessed December 12, 2016, [http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol6iss2/2\\_Givens%20pp%20188-214\\_jm.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol6iss2/2_Givens%20pp%20188-214_jm.pdf).

the church warrants and this is because there is perhaps at least one more aspect that is crying out for attention, namely, the unmet needs and unresolved issues of congregational leaders.

One of the disciplines that has strikingly undergone enormous transformational leadership is the discipline of education. Education is basically the discipline to provide formal literacy to persons from a young age to adulthood. It is the formal process of preparing persons to become absorbed as functional members of the society<sup>24</sup>. It is also often designed to provide the enabling environment for personal development in keeping with one's talents, gifts and endowments. Sometimes, the mission of education seems lopsided in its developmental function as more emphasis is given to intellectual development than all the other aspects of education. Therefore, those who earlier in life become absorbed into intellectual demands of formal learning move on to greater things while others with more diverse inclinations are left to find their path by chance.

In order to cater to all members of the society more effectively, a successful educational policy must include a leadership that completely redefines overall objectives. It must be based on a leadership theory that embraces a more diverse strategy that covers a wider range of goals and embraces a more robust approach in realizing those goals. According to Dimmock and Walker, "the development of conceptual frameworks and instrumentation are imperative if the field is to be abreast of globalization of policy and practice...in international educational leadership and management<sup>25</sup>." In essence,

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<sup>24</sup> Ralph W. Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Clive Dimmock and Allan Walker, "Developing Comparative and International Educational Leadership and Management: A Cross-Cultural Model," *School Leadership & Management* 20, no. 2 (May 1, 2000): 143–160.

Dimmock and Walker argue that current strategic design for educational leadership must integrate globalization in order to be successful. Implying that educational leadership needs to be robust and reach beyond normative boundaries. In a study conducted by the University of Melbourne on educational leadership models, it was their conclusion that a “whole-child focused educational philosophy, through relationship building and staff development, and the display of a range of appropriate personal qualities such as integrity, high energy, sensitivity, enthusiasm, and persistence...” were significantly responsible for the high level of success recorded over the period of the study<sup>26</sup>. The study outcome seems to prove the notion that when leadership does not remain mainline, it can actually attain true success with added value of sustainability. I would add that leadership qualities delineated in the report was not merely due to mainstream educational leadership principles but one that includes such strategies that address internalized unmet needs and unresolved issues at least to manageable levels so that they do not interfere with the outcomes of the study.

Based on the preceding, the inference can be drawn that a therapeutic strategy could be invaluable to the strategic success of leaders when it matters the most. This is already known in many world disciplines and many who have gone on to incorporate psychotherapy and psychology as part of their leadership strategies have increasingly shown that they have an edge over those who ignore it<sup>27</sup>. Organizational leadership at any point in time essentially defines the strength of any organization. When its strategy

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<sup>26</sup> “An Australian Model of Successful School Leadership: Moving from Success to Sustainability,” n.d., accessed December 17, 2016, [https://www.essr.net/~jafundo/mestrado\\_material\\_itgikhnlid/IV/Lidcran%C3%A7as/lideran%C3%A7a%20e%20sucesso.pdf](https://www.essr.net/~jafundo/mestrado_material_itgikhnlid/IV/Lidcran%C3%A7as/lideran%C3%A7a%20e%20sucesso.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> “2\_Givens Pp 188-214\_jm.pdf.”

includes the psychological wellbeing of the leadership by creating the platform for addressing unmet needs and unresolved issues, it is more likely to experience sustainable success in realizing its objectives. In essence, unmet needs and unresolved issues are psychological conditions that stealthily sneak up and block the capacities of able leaders from reaching their full potentials; but they can be effectively mitigated.

The field of sociology is devoted to the study of societal development and structure. It is designed to observe and record patterns of human behavior negative or positive that form the building blocks of society. A more functional view of sociology suggests that it is aimed at identifying, defining, understanding and sometimes managing social problems. While it can be quite a challenge to define social problems as they vary considerably from one societal context to another, it is viewed as any phenomenon that apparently affects a significant number of individuals within that society<sup>28</sup>. When a social trend is observed to have a problematic impact on a number of people within a community, a social problem has emerged. By inference, if a significant number of church contexts show tendencies of leadership failures which inadvertently affects members of the society, it is possibly qualifies as a social problem.

While the core competence of sociologists is to observe behavioral pattern through which they can predict social outcomes, they can also create models for addressing social problems or preventing them before they occur. Furthermore, the development of such models are often based on historical data and cumulative information about human and societal behavior that reflect either positively or negatively

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<sup>28</sup> Jackie Brooks, "The Principles of Sociology," *Online Learning Tips* (January 7, 2013), accessed December 17, 2016, <http://onlinelearningtips.com/2013/01/07/the-principles-of-sociology/>.

on the society as a whole. While the psychotherapist or psychologist deploys strategies to unravel debilitating psychological and emotional patterns in persons, the sociologist is more concerned about the impact an emergent behavioral pattern would have on an otherwise normal society<sup>29</sup>.

It follows therefore, that there is a sociological answer to the challenge of serial leadership failures within congregational contexts if it impacts a significant number of people within the community. Given that the possible reason for the failures is the rather parochial view of leadership that ignores the unmet needs and unresolved issues of the leaders, then it becomes sociologically predictable what kinds of outcomes to expect. Such a scenario would clearly warrant a sociological solution. Arguing that there is a need for sociological leadership, Whiteford and Ganem opine that “gaining a more holistic approach of leadership will assist in the understanding of many areas of sociology wherein ideas about leadership, authority, and power are embedded.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, sociological solutions to leadership challenges would include critical considerations for a social strategy that can holistically eliminate those challenges.

Sociological leadership sees cultural dynamics and seeks balance by addressing those cultural dynamics viewed as the source of clearly identified leadership problems. To this end, it follows that leadership adjustments flow mainly from understanding social interactions and includes the need for both psychological and social strategies to both

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<sup>29</sup> James M. Henslin, *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*, 11 edition. (Boston: Pearson, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Whiteford, Scott and Ganem, Natasha, “Is There Such a Thing as ‘A Sociology of Leadership?’,” *Work in Progress* (October 27, 2015), accessed December 17, 2016, <https://workinprogress.oowsection.org/2015/10/27/is-there-such-a-thing-as-a-sociology-of-leadership/>.

address and eliminate internal challenges that are intrinsic to the persons in leadership positions<sup>31</sup>.

In the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Miner et al wrote about the Self Determination Theory stating that “psychological health and well-being depend on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.”<sup>32</sup> The paper goes on to suggest that significant others in different ways contribute to the perceived satisfaction of those basic psychological needs; adding that for Christians, and in his view, God fits the role of a significant Other mainly because their perception of God as the One who meets their needs.

The main consideration of this paper is the nature of unmet needs and unresolved issues as they impact the ability of congregational leaders to sustainably flourish in their callings. The position is also taken that those unmet needs and unresolved issues to various degrees are responsible for the epidemic of leadership failures within congregational contexts. One of the fields of study that would help to unpack and better understand these postulates is psychology. And it is very helpful when sources are available to converge the concepts of psychology and theology for concurrent considerations.

Psychologists have conducted in depth studies into the theories surrounding human needs and how it relates to their behavior. This probably gave rise to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs which finds correlations between needs, satisfaction and the order in

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<sup>31</sup> Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana, *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, n.d., accessed December 17, 2016, <https://hbr.org/product/handbook-of-leadership-theory-and-practice/an/12326-HBK-ENG>.

<sup>32</sup> Maureen Miner, Martin Dowson, and Kim Malone, “Spiritual Satisfaction of Basic Psychological Needs and Psychological Health,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 41, no. 4 (2013): 298.

which those needs are met. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theorizes that it is human nature to prioritize needs and the order in which those needs are met. He further postulates that there is a general hierarchy to the way humans seek to meet their needs starting from the most basic to the most complex ones. To illustrate this idea, a pyramid of needs was developed in which the lowest part corresponds to the most important needs while the top of the pyramid represents more sophisticated needs. The theory groups human needs into five categories in the order of importance as follows: physiological, safety, love/affection, esteem and self-actualization<sup>33</sup>.

It is Maslow's belief that human[s] would not normally jettison basic needs for those of a more complex nature. That is, a person would perhaps not be too concerned about self-actualization when their basic survival needs for food and shelter are not met. The reasoning follows that some needs only become relevant when other needs have been settled. In light of this, is it safe to infer that a congregational leader who struggles with unmet psychological needs and unresolved issues would take seriously the need for self-actualization? A rather simplistic answer to this question would be no because those unmet needs and unresolved issues would always find ways to impair the essential cognitive functions needed for effective leadership because they remain unmet and unresolved. To this extent, Maslow is right.

Viewed conversely, it is relatively easy to see that although this theory makes natural humanistic sense, it could also quite easily fall apart because it is rather simplistically linear. It seems to ignore many of the complexities that characterize human

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<sup>33</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *Hierarchy of Needs: A Theory of Human Motivation* ([www.all-about-psychology.com](http://www.all-about-psychology.com), 2011).

needs. Who is to say for instance, that a person would not for some reason decide to skip one category of needs within Maslow's pyramid for another? People have been known to reject physiological needs in order to protect their self-esteem or even self-actualization. Maslow's pyramid of needs appears not to have fully taken into consideration that the theoretical structure he laid out will not always hold true, for the simple fact that human need is very complex<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, Maslow's postulate has been in use by businesses as a tool for understanding and driving motivation. Even this does not hold very well because while motivation can be superficially generated, the true sources of motivation are diverse and difficult to determine. For example, Kings have been known to abdicate their thrones for the sake of love and this does not rank high in the pyramid. Need is indeed complex.

Unmet needs and unresolved issues are even more complex. One of the assumptions this project is making is that the leaders in congregational settings desire to be successful in their callings but are not realizing the levels of success they desire. Another assumption is that all people have psychological and emotional blockages stemming from their unmet needs and unresolved issues. Admittedly, this will not be true for all individuals; there will always be outliers. Yet, for those who fit the descriptions, their leadership woes can indeed be traced to past experiences locked into their psyche which constantly interfere with their abilities to reach peak performances sustainably.

Psychotherapy is a discipline that mainly addresses the emotional needs that are often masked by other opportunistic needs. In psychotherapy, the therapist builds a

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<sup>34</sup> William Kremer and Claudia Hammond, "Abraham Maslow and the Pyramid That Beguiled Business," *BBC News*, September 1, 2013, sec. Magazine, accessed December 18, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23902918>.



trusting relationship with the patient while engaging them in dialogues aimed at peeling back the layers to unveil the not so obvious unmet needs and unresolved issues<sup>35</sup>. The task of the therapist does not include suggesting the nature of the patient's problems or challenges to them; rather, it is gentle, patient conversation in a conducive environment that guides the patient to hidden facts about themselves. Unlike other professional who care for troubled patients, psychotherapists do not give prescriptions, nor use any other methods other than dialogue to unearth the concealed things. More often than not, the patient reaches the point where the unmet needs are revealed and the unresolved issues become contextualized<sup>36</sup>. The next stage could mean various things for the patient—some find resolution and others don't. What is common to both categories though is that they know what was causing the blockage and would be better prepared to deal with new crises in the future.

### Conclusion

Many theories have been discoursed to help unpack the nature of unmet needs and unresolved issues. Some of them are interdisciplinary in their approach, others are more specific to the specific discipline. One of the main outcomes of reviewing various theoretical constructs in various disciplines is that it has helped broaden my understanding of how the challenges of leadership are addressed. Clearly, most of the

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<sup>35</sup> Irving B. Weiner and Robert F. Bornstein, *Principles of Psychotherapy: Promoting Evidence-Based Psychodynamic Practice*, 3 edition. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> "Ten Principles of Psychotherapy: Building Hope," *Psychology Today*, accessed December 18, 2016, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/rejoining-joy/201101/ten-principles-psychotherapy-building-hope>.

solutions, theories and concepts offered center on transforming persons into more strategic, result-oriented leaders.

While this is quite common in commercial, business and professional circles, they are limited in scope because the persons are often viewed as dispensable resources that can only be useful at their peak and replaced at slightest signs of declining performances. Yet, it is clear that business models of leadership development reach quite significantly close to the root of the problem with transformational leadership and implementation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a motivational tool. They also frequently leverage sociological and psychological concepts as enhancements to their leadership strategies except that they lean more toward motivation than resolving deep-seated issues.

The psychological and psychotherapeutic processes strike closest to the heart of unmet needs and unresolved issues mainly because they include strategies that aim at contextualizing the unmet needs and unresolved issues in ways that other disciplines don't. Hence, this would be a helpful approach when dealing with unmet needs and unresolved issues among congregational leaders. In light of this, the project would demonstrate that when psychotherapeutic processes are applied to Christian leaders with unmet needs and unresolved issues, they are more likely to become aware and better prepared to take on new challenges for their church contexts.

With such new insights, within the next chapter the project design is discussed. It also captures records of the entire process including all the results, discoveries and challenges.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

Life experiences have shaped my life and ministry, from being born in Guyana, South America, raised in a single parent home with three older siblings, four younger and myself being the fourth. From the tender age of five, experiences were shaped which set the course for such brokenness—unmet needs and unresolved issues. These life circumstances would need Yahweh to put me back together for God’s purposes. As I reflected over my younger self, I saw myself yearning for the affection of my father who had abandon his responsibility as a father and that younger self interpreted that moment as abandonment.

That moment in time created the platform and foundation for unmet needs and unresolved issues to grow. By the time I became a teenager, I had started to resent my father had become quite angry. I felt as though there was a void in my life and the feeling was awfully painful. Later, I moved from disbelief to acceptance of my new reality—I was going to grow up without my biological father. Yet, there was still a longing for any semblance of fatherhood, so I deferred to my older brother as my new father figure. Soon enough, the relationship was interrupted by his migration to the United States. It brought back the trauma of losing my father all over again.

By the age of thirteen, my mother came back from work and announced that she saw my father and reminded him it was going to be my birthday in a few days. He responded by saying that he would be bringing a present. This magically dissipated the anger, and that anger was turned into glee at the prospect of receiving a birthday present from the one with whom the void had been created. Unfortunately the joy was short lived because three days before the learner's birthday the sad news was received that my father had passed away.

Shock, anger, disbelief and depression were some of the emotions that became the mode of survival. Hopes were shattered with such finality and irreparability that becoming despondent was allowed and accepted by the learner. Not only was any plans for a birthday party canceled, but the loss of a father who was barely known and will never get to be known. As I looked for someone to blame, blaming father for leaving and for dying was where the blame landed. He became the epitome of blame...blamed for not caring, for not being there, even for dying, for not being there when needed the most and for never having him to hold.

As a young lady the void—empty space from childhood became the focal point for me and that led to a relationship with a young man with whom I thought would fill the void and remove all of the anger, depression, hurt and pain accumulated from life experiences. He meant everything to me and I gave him all of my love and we got married. Resting in this hope of not losing him like my older brother and later father. However, like most marriages, the honeymoon stage was blissful; a slice of heaven to say the least. But soon things took a turn for the worst. One day, as I returned home from work, to my disbelief, half of the things within the home were gone as well as my

husband—déjà vu! Heartache, brokenness, sadness, depression, anger, disbelief, and rejection resurface again as the marriage ended in divorce. Alas! It was a moment of reliving the disappearance of my father again, only this time, it was much, much more acutely.

However, it was my encounter with Christ which was rather providentially that the light of His word began to comfort and strengthened me. My faith grew stronger in Yahweh and my training as mental health clinician began to expose and highlight the issue of unmet needs and unresolved issues.

The foremost memory of the commencement of the journey to initiate the program was the statement heard on the first day at the Intensive session, “trust the process”. Hearing the word “trust” created a plethora of emotions. Trust has now become synonymous with anxiety, heartache, disappointments, rejection, abandonment, suffering, brokenness and most of all pain. Trust played a great part in unmet needs and unresolved issue which fueled the passion to take on and finish the project and bring awareness to the impact of unmet needs and unresolved issues on leadership in a congregational setting.

Unmet needs and unresolved issues constitute a phenomenon that prevents congregational leaders from fully exploring their true potentials. This statement both summarizes and contextualizes the aims of this ministry project. The success or failure of any congregation greatly depends on the state of its leadership. Likewise, the fitness of a congregational leadership for effective work rests heavily on the leadership’s ability to discover and address their unmet needs and unresolved issues.

The preliminary work at the foundational level has unveiled a number of supporting facts that give credence to this original position and this provide the basis for

developing a pattern of analysis aimed at defining the problem and fostering a fuller understanding of this phenomenon.

In light of this, considerable work has been done to establish the biblical foundation that sets the inquiry within scriptural contexts which draws attention to the theological thought that would influence further inferences as the project progresses. Likewise, the theoretical foundations that shed light on various related theories while focusing on the most applicable will provide additional basis for the project execution and interpretation. The legwork done so far has taken the approach of dialoging with a diversity of academic, professional and experts view on the subject of unmet needs and unresolved issues and their effects on congregational leadership. While some of the concepts examined offered support for the project position, others provided the necessary critical views that helped to strengthen the validity of the project's main claims. The entire process however, has led to inferences, conclusions and synthesis of ideas that would prove useful for subsequent stages of the project.

In psychology, sociology and psychotherapy, the approach has been the internal transformation of the leaders by addressing issues that often remain masked when no inquiry is done to discover them. These professional disciplines have essentially developed models that allow practitioners to examine the lives of leaders with the aim of uncovering deep-seated issues that could potentially affect their ability to serve effectively.

Since unmet needs and unresolved issues are often challenges that the victims are rarely aware of, one of the best approaches to uncover them is the psychotherapeutic process. This project will attempt to address the possibility of using these processes to

uncover the challenges congregational leaders' face, with the aim of drawing their attention to them as a way of mitigate failures to attain fullness in their leadership callings within congregation that they serve.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this project was to investigate how bringing awareness to the impact of unmet needs and unresolved issues on leadership in a congregational setting. This project involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The project began with designing a one group pretest-posttest design which involves three stages-- the pretest, the intervention and the posttest. Figure 1 below shows a schematic of the research design. In this project O<sub>1</sub> represents the pretest survey. The O<sub>2</sub> represents the post intervention survey which was the same as the pretest.

O<sub>1</sub>-----X-----O<sub>2</sub>

The variables in this study were as follows: the independent variable ( $\chi$ ) is the intervention, bringing awareness to the impact of unmet needs and unresolved issues, and the dependent variable is the level of participants' survey responses. The one group pretest-posttest design is appropriate for this study because any changes on the posttest survey would assessed for efficacy of the intervention.

The pre and post intervention surveys would be used to assess the levels of awareness on church leaders and the data would be analyzed using simple statistical analysis and displayed using bar graphs to make comparisons before and after the intervention. Also the presenters will observe the intervention and make notes during the one day workshop.

To begin the process, an informal meeting was held with the senior pastor in February 2017 informing him of the project and asking for permission to use the “Directorate” of which they are both apart. He is the senior pastor and I function as an assistant director of the discipleship department. The Directorate is the decision making body of Wholeness International Ministries. Secondly, an official meeting with the senior pastor was held on Friday May 13, 2017 at 2:15 pm to officially inform him of the study and the requirements needed by United Theological Seminary for the project. At that meeting the participant consent letter (see appendix A) was read and an indebt detail of the project and how it relates to the leadership of that church was presented. Personal synergy was shared between myself and the context and he then gave permission for me to come to the “Directorate Meeting” that is held once per month to make a presentation to them at that forum. The meeting for May was rescheduled to Friday June 2, 2017 at 6:30 pm. At the end of the meeting the presentation was given providing the leaders that were in attendance of the nature and purpose of the project.

The participant consent letter was read aloud to the group and some more detail about my project. Immediately after the presentation, the Administrator and Administrative Assistant declined participation in the project and them declining to participate was accepted without being questioned. Other leaders present were asking them why they chose not to participate. This will be discussed later in the final chapter. However, the senior pastor and several leaders at the moment agreed to partake. At that meeting the proposed date for the project was Saturday July 22, 2017 but that was not possible because of the other things on the calendar and some leaders had vacations



already scheduled for that time. We discussed several dates but one was not agreed upon at that time.

The second leader's meeting held Saturday July 8, 2017 with leaders who were not present at the first meeting. The participant consent letter was again used to address the leaders and I shared part of my personal testimony to support my credibility for taking on the project. This group of leaders was more enthusiastic to be a part of the project most likely because personal testimony offered had something to do with it. However, participants consent forms were not available for leaders to sign at that moment because it was left at home. Despite that seemingly set back several leaders agreed to be apart by a show of hands and verbal commitment.

The next step was to pursue other leaders individually and invite them as well as encourage them to participate. At the same time signatures were being obtained by those who agreed to be a part. This was done over three consecutives Sundays at the 8:00 am and 11:30 am services. Personal phone calls were done to reach absentee leaders. Eventually, only one of the six leaders spoken to volunteered to participate. However, the other five were asked to participate in a focused interview of which they agreed and at the interview the participants signed the consent letter. However, only two interviews were done because of time constraint and participants having to go out of town. The learner found it difficult with settling on a resolve date that would have accommodated all leaders that agreed to participate. The learner then chose October 28, 2017 as the project date.

### Implementation

On Monday October 16, 2017, two of three male (minister) participated in a focused interview using the questions from the pre and posttest as a guide (see appendix B) since they were not able to participate on the day of the workshop. The learner observed significant body language and eye contact changed in the participant when asked the question that had to do with *Cared About/Supported- Is it significant to feel needed by those close to me? At first he said no, then he asked for the question to be read again and then he said yes. His breathing was noticeably changed, his voice's normal rate and volume was slightly down and his eye contact downcast and he excessively tapped his hand on the table and he shook his legs. The second question where changed was observed was Acceptance- Is it important that people accept me for who I am? The participant asked for clarity and needed me to explain. He sat up in his chair and with a strong eye contact said yes. The other question where there was a noticeable changed in behavior was when asked if they avoided activities, places or people because they were reminded of a stressful experience? The participant responded—not at all but his body language became tense, he began to rub his hands together, his voice was once again lowered and he sat back in the chair with his arms folded.*

*On Thursday October 19, 2017 a second interview was done with another male minister-director of evangelism, he was asked the same questions. However, changes were noted in different questioning areas. Safety- Did you feel protected as a child?*

Two weeks prior to the workshop, a group text was send to ten participants reminding them of the date, place and time and only two people responded. In the text and prior they were told that breakfast would not be served but dinner would be provided

for lunch. A second text was sent one week prior to the event and one more was done with the professional associates to reconfirm their participation and to finalize the intervention. One associate Dr. John McQueen was responsible for teaching on unmet needs and the other associate Dr. Sherry Hamilton was responsible for presenting on unresolved issues. A home visit was done with the context associates to discuss the agenda and the role she would be playing on the day of the project. She was responsible for reading the participant informed consent form and obtaining their signatures, distributing and collecting all pre and post surveys. Three days before the project, all the helpers for serving and setting up for the dinner during the workshop were contacted.

Two days before the project, a personal visit to the super market to purchase the products for the project day. The menu was discussed and set three weeks prior. The menu was:

Baked salmon in a mushroom sauce

Stuffed chicken breast with spinach

Wild rice

Asparagus

Broccoli

Garden salad

Assorted fruits (strawberry, blue berry, cantaloupe, honeydew, grapes and watermelon)

Sorrel, mauby, assorted sodas and water—drinks

Assorted cookies—macadamia nuts, oatmeal and raisins and chocolate chips

The day before the project the presenters, context associated, helpers and chef were contacted via telephone for final confirmation. On this day a text from one of the participants stating she would not be able to come due to her being needed at work the next day. With her not being able to come the numbers of leaders then dropped to nine. Disappointed, it was time to call the mentor of the program. The response received was a simple “just get the project done”. We continued to set up one room at the church for the dinner and another room for the presentation. The room for dinner was set up with three tables for participants to sit and eat. Each rectangle table was covered with gold disposable tablecloths, a charger with a dinner plate sitting in it, knives, forks, spoons and dinner napkins. Three tables were established for the food and they were set up with cream disposable tablecloths, sterners to keep the food warm and serving utensils. The other room was set up classroom style with individual desks and chairs and a SMART Board® for the presentation.

The morning of the project the pastor opened the building for participants to come in. He and the context associate helped to remove all of the food from the car and assisted with logistics for setting up the room.

While they were putting those things away some leaders began to come in. It was a surprise that one of the ministers brought his wife to the session even though the learner did not get prior notice of her coming. However, because of her coming the number of participants went back up to ten. A call was placed to the presenter because he was not there and the workshop was scheduled to start at 10:00 am sharp and he was scheduled to be the first presenter. He was running late. We were assured he would arrive soon. This time was spent continuing to prepare the meeting space and set up the projector. At that

time only the learner, context associate, one presenter and seven leaders were there. Also, the context associate placed folders that were pre-packed with a pen, at the desks where the participants had gathered along with their consent form and a note book.

Once everyone was there, the workshop then begun The session began with the reading from Scott Peck book *The Road Less Traveled* “[l]ife is difficult”<sup>1</sup> and the scripture text John 10:10. A significant portion of the synergy was shared helping the participants to see the importance of telling personal stories and making connections. The pastor and participants were thanked and honored for their presence and their commitment to this process of learning. This set the stage to begin the workshop, “unmet needs and unresolved issues”. The two professional associated aid in the presentation of “unmet needs and unresolved issues”. The context associate passed out the consent letter to all in attendance and distributes the pretest survey.

While the surveys were being filled out, the other team leaders met and continued planning and setting up equipment. The pretests were completed and collected by the context associates. The first presentation on unmet needs began at 11:30 am using PowerPoint style. The educational part was about unmet needs and its impact on the individual followed by a whole group discussion and questions. Illustrations of two individuals were also used to highlight the impact of unmet needs.

To further enhance the learning experience two examples of client’s cases presented to demonstrate unmet needs and begin open discussion on the subject. Shared was a thirty six year old female who wanted to feel acceptance and to be accepted by her

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<sup>1</sup>Peck, M. Scott. *The Road Less Traveled, Timeless Edition: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*. Anniversary edition. New York: Touchstone, 2003.

peers but out of her hurts and pain she judged others and convinced herself that she would not be accepted. It was all in her head and it stemmed from her childhood after her mother went away and leave her with her grandparents. Another example was the fifty four years old client who wanted to experienced intimacy with her partner of twenty years but because of her insecurities she believed that her partner does not love her. Exploring her childhood she believed that her father walked out and on her and her mother. She was three years old when the incident occurred. All these years she never got clarity from her mother to investigate what had happened. She just believed because her father was absent that it was his fault. To her surprised, when she questioned her mother at fifty four years old, she was told that it was her mother who took her and left her father because of domestic abuse.

During the presentation the presenter gave the definition for trauma as “psychological and emotional pain” when one of the participants interrupted the presenter by saying “he just realized that he had experienced trauma”. He told his story of when he was about eight years old and was told he had to go and lived with his sick aunt. What was traumatic for him was that he left his bed at home to go and sleep under a table on some bags. Two other participants joined in and shared their traumatic experienced as children. The presenter was able to bring clarity to one of the participant. Another participant revealed that she was in counseling and recommend that others do the same.

The session ended at 12:45 pm and immediately following the group discussion dinner was served during the lunch hour. Through observation many participants remained with the presenter to have further discussion on a one to one basis. This helped for the lunch to go smoothly as people trickled into the room that was already set up from

the night before and during the first discussion. While having lunch the conversations continued between the leaders and the presenter and between themselves about the session. The dinner was enjoyed by all and several asked for seconds.

After lunch the second session took place and the presenter unpacked unresolved issues which were followed by a whole group discussion and questions. Illustrations of two individuals were used to highlight the impact of unresolved issues. A forty two years old woman came for counseling because she was having conflict with her fourteen years old teenage daughter. The young lady was having good grades in school but she was beginning to get very interested in boys and the mother became overly anxious, angry and paranoid. Before counseling she was unable to recognize how her current reaction to her daughter was being powered by her unresolved old wounds and unfinished business (she had not forgiven herself for the early sexual experiences she had which started at twelve years old) and was not aware that she was being triggered.

Another example was a thirty-seven years old male who came in for counseling because of him having difficulties with pornography. He was also unaware how his current behavior was being fueled by his past unresolved issue. Between the ages of nine and eleven he was sexually abused by an older male. He reported praying and asking God to help but he kept punishing himself. With counseling he was able to confront his past and experienced healing.

The session ended at 3:00 pm and immediately, the participants were given the posttest survey. The surveys were then collected by the context associate and were placed in a pre-labeled envelope (posttest survey). After the survey was collected several participants were awaiting to have further discussion with the presenters while others left.

Two weeks later the data was then analyzed to determine the extent to which the dependent variable has been affected by the independent variable.

### **Unmet needs Survey Questions and Results**

#### *Have you ever experienced trauma?*

In the pretest 90% of the participants responded that they had experienced trauma while 10% responded that they had never experienced trauma. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed 100% had experienced trauma.

#### *Safety- Did you feel protected as a child?*

In the pretest 90% of the participants responded that they felt protected as children while 10% responded that they did not feel protected as a child. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 80% responded positively to feeling protected as a child while 20% responded that they did not feel protected as a child. There was a 10% increase among the participants who did not feel protected as children.

#### *Acceptance- Is it important that people accept me for who I am?*

In the pretest 80% of the participants responded that it was important that people accept them for who they are while 20% responded that it was not important that people accepted them for who they were. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 90% responded positively to this question while 10% responded no. This was a 10% increase in the number of participants that felt that acceptance was important to them.

#### *Respected/Valued- Is it important to be seen as an individual?*



In the pretest 100% of the participants responded that it was important to be seen as an individual. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 90% responded yes while 10% responded negatively. There was a 10% decrease in the number of participants who responded to this question in the affirmative.

*Trust- Is it significant that others rely on you?*

In the pretest 80% of the participants responded that it was significant for other to rely on them while 20 % responded no. However, after the intervention, the posttest remained the same.

*Sense of Security- Did you feel that those close to you are there for you?*

In the pretest 90% of the participants reported they felt close to those close to them while 10% responded no. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 80% responded yes while 20% responded no. This means that there was a 10% increase for those participants who did not feel a sense of security.

*Cared About/Supported- Is it significant to feel needed by those close to me?*

In the pretest 100% of the participants reported that it was significant to feel needed by those who are closest to them. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a change in that 70% responded yes while 30% responded no. This is a 30% decrease in the responses of the participants who felt significant.

*Autonomy- Is it vital to feel independent?*

In the pretest 70% of the participants reported that it was vital to feel independent while 30% responded no. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 80% responded yes while 20% responded no. This is a 10% decrease in the participants' perceived need for autonomy.

*Approval- It is important to be appreciated by others?*

In the pretest 90% reported that it was important to be appreciated by others while 10% responded no. However, after the intervention the posttest remained the same.

*Trust- Did you have issues with trusting adults (authority) as a child?*

In the pretest 20% reported that they have issues with trusting adults as a child while 80% responded no. However, after the intervention the posttest remained the same.

*Cared About/Supported - Is it significant to feel needed by those close to me?*

In the pretest 90% of the participants reported it was significant for them to feel needed by those close to them while 10% responded no. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 70% responded yes while 30% responded no. This means that there is a 20% decrease in participant response for those who felt that it was important to be needed or useful. However, this question was reported twice on the survey only as an error but the result was different for the same question.

### **Unresolved Issues Survey Questions and Results**

*Do you have difficulty concentrating?*

When participants were asked about having difficulty concentrating, in the pretest 30% participants reported not at all while 70% responded moderately. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 50% responded not at all while 50% responded moderately. This means that 20% of the participants no longer perceived that they had difficulty concentrating.

*Do you feel jumpy or easily startled?*

When participants were asked if they feel jumpy or easily startled, in the pretest 60% participants reported not at all while 40% responded moderately. After the intervention, the posttest revealed that 50% responded not at all while 40% responded moderately. It is important to note one participant failed to answer this question.

*Do you have physical reactions such as sweating, increased heart rate or trouble breathing when you are reminded of a stressful experience from the past?*

When participants were asked about having physical reactions when they are reminded of a stressful experience from the past, in the pretest 60% of participants responded: not at all, while 40% responded that they experienced moderate reactions. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 50% responded not at all while 40% responded moderately and 10% responded extremely. This means that there was a 10% decrease for participants who did not have this experience and a 10% increase for participants in the category of extremely.

*Do you avoid thinking or talking about a stressful experience from the past or avoid having feelings related to it?*

Participants were asked if they avoided thinking or talking about stressful experiences, the pretest revealed that 50% of participants never avoid talking about stressful experiences, 40% responded moderately while 10% responded that they extremely avoid discussing stressful experiences. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 50% responded not at all while 50% responded moderately. This means that there was a decrease in participant responses.

*Do you avoid activities, places and people because they remind you of a stressful experience from the past?*

In the pretest, when participants were asked if they avoided activities, places or people because they were reminded of a stressful experience, 50% of the participants reported not at all while 40% responded moderately and 10% were not sure. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 50% responded not at all and 50% responded moderately.

*Do you have trouble remembering important parts of a stressful experience from the past?*

In the pretest, when participants were asked if they had trouble remembering important parts of a stressful past experience, 80% of the participants reported not at all while 20% responded moderately. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 70% responded not at all and 30% responded moderately.

*Do you feel emotionally numb or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?*

In the pretest, when participants were asked if they felt emotionally numb or unable to feel love for those close to you, 80% of the participants reported not at all while 20% responded moderately. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 70% responded not at all and 30% responded moderately.

*Do you feel irritable or having angry outbursts?*

In the pretest, when participants were asked if they felt irritable or had angry outbursts, 60% of the participants reported not at all while 40% responded moderately. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 50% responded not at all and 50% responded moderately.

*Do you have repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or images of a stressful experience from the past?*

In the pretest, when participants were asked if they have repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts or images of a stressful past experience, 50% of the participants reported not at all while 40% responded moderately and 10% revealed extremely. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 60% responded not at all, 30% responded moderately and 10% responded extremely.

*Are you “super alert”, watchful or on guard?*

In the pretest, when participants were asked if they are watchful or on guard, 20% of the participants reported not at all while 70% responded moderately and 10% revealed extremely. However, after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 30% responded not at all, 60% responded moderately and 10% responded extremely.

*Do you feel very upset when something reminds you of a stressful experience from the past?*

When participants were asked about feeling upset when something reminds them of a past stressful experience, in the pretest 50% of the participants reported not at all while 40% responded moderately and 10% revealed that they were not sure. However,

after the intervention, the posttest revealed a slight variation in that 50% responded not at all, 30% responded moderately and 10% responded extremely.

### **Summary of Learnings**

Before starting this project I had no idea of what I was getting into. Being totally unaware of the profound and transformative impact this project would have on my life. Entering the Doctor of Ministry Program it found me oblivious to how her life would be changed. In my mind I was ready to quit after the third day of Intensive Week August 2015. On that day I was convinced that it was Yahweh who had led me on this journey by two significant things that happened. While in my head I was thinking of quitting, a fellow colleague turned around and pointed out my table and me and said to the mentors and the other seniors in the class that they need to pay attention to “those new people at that table because they look like they are ready to quit”. I remember gasping for air as she uttered those words. The next thing that happened was during lunch break that same day one of the graduating colleague came to her with a bag of all the books that was needed for the first semester which she had just purchased from the book store. I was in awe as she handed me the bag and said “the Lord spoke to her and tell her to buy the books for me”. This was mesmerizing because it was my third day in the program and was not acquainted with her prior to those few days and we had not spoken much.

As mentioned earlier that it was during the period of time as co-facilitator in the church’s marriage class that informal observation was done. By means of reflecting back over those ten years in that class that the changes had occurred before my very eyes. At

the formative years with the class it was young single Christians who had never been married and were youths of the congregation for most of their lives that was entering the class to be married but in 2014 there was an observable drastic change. To highlight the one that give shape to this project was a forty-five year old African American male and forty-two year old female who enter the marriage class. For the male this was going to be his third marriage and for her it was going to be her second. The learner remember sitting in the class and asking herself why this was happening and without her realizing it the answer had come in the form of “unresolved issues and unmet needs”.

I was naïve somewhat as to what to do with that information until entering the Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary which helped to bring shape and clarity to unmet needs and unresolved issues. For the first three semesters unmet needs and unresolved issues was perused as an external project—the requirements needed to fulfill and obtain a degree. It was the fourth and fifth semester where the project began to take a turn and new meaning began to emerge. It was in semester one to be exact, where it was told to us that “the project has to come from within you” and “trust the process” and upon hearing those statements the walls around my heart went up a little higher. Unmet needs and unresolved issues not only have the power to cloud your future; it has the power to steal it from right under your nose if you do nothing about it. It was the approached of the fifth semester that the tables of my heart began to changed and instead of resisting the proecess and being externally focused, and continue to give power to something that is truly powerless, without my attention I surrendered. It was through embracing the process that the darkness within and the wall around my heart began to be

ignited and walls broken down by the power of the Holy Spirit which was always so illuminating at the intensive sessions.

I have a new understanding of what the statement “the project has to come from within you” means. This means to stop, breathe, examine self, ask for help, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and give permission for Him to search and reveal what one might not be willing to face, embrace or give voice to. The biggest revelation came after this process was fully embraced when I realized the revelation of “unmet need and unresolved issue” I received in marriage class was my personal story. I was able to identify unresolved grief, anger, resentment, and painful childhood memories that were not dealt with. Depression, sadness, brokenness and rejection to name a few were some of the unmet needs and unresolved issues that I had to accept in order to receive healing.

To aid with fostering personal healing, I returned to Abraham story in Genesis 15:1-6 and the Woman at the well story in John 4:7-18 to observe how Yahweh provided and brought healing to their unmet needs and unresolved issues. It was when Abraham was in dialogue with the Master that he accepts and gives voice to his unmet need or unresolved issue of not having an heir that he was able to embrace and trust the process of Yahweh, he then received his promised. It was so with the nameless woman at the well after she was in dialogue with Jesus that she embraced and gave voice to her shame that the power of her unmet needs and unresolved issues were broken and she was able to overcome and fulfill her potential.

Healing was nurtured through the narratives read in several books during the Biblical Foundations and Theological Foundations paper from the Black Theologians and Feminist Theologian who dialogue about Yahweh being the “need meeting God”. It was



done through returning to seek professional counseling. It was Mezirow in *Transformative Learning in Practice* says “[t]ransformative learning may be defined as learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change.”<sup>2</sup> Transformation indeed is what is being experienced by the learner.

On the day of the project I learned something new about my context professional associate. She is the director of Discipleship who presented on unresolved issues and is also a very private person. Before her presentation she laid out her credentials and share some of her early childhood memories of her personal life. It was in that setting that I learned about her upbringing in a single parent home. Ever since her presentation she became very vocal and making comments like “this issue is unresolved and I don’t want to be a part of it until we deal with it”. It is evident that this project has a profound impact on her life and will continue to impact it positively.

The other professional associate is a license clinical social worker and an ordained pastor. He showed me a document that he is writing and at the beginning he quoted a part of this project and spoke about unmet needs and unresolved issues. He also confessed to me that he has identified several unresolved issues in his life and will be working on them one by one. He has since made a trip to England in August before his presentation to visit his sister because he did not go to their brother’s funeral which happened over five years ago. He said he has come face-to-face with unresolved grief.

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<sup>2</sup> Mezirow, Jack, and Edward W. Taylor. *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*. 1 edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009. 22.

### **Conclusion**

During the project before the intervention 90% reported having had traumatic experiences and after the intervention it shifted to 100%. There is evidence that all the participants had some awareness of the traumatic experiences in their lives, yet the extents to which these experiences are impacting their lives remain unknown. For the purposes of this project, it is therefore reasonable to infer that owing to the traumatic experiences that have remained untreated, they translate to unmet needs and unresolved issues. This ostensibly proves the theses that increased awareness of the unmet needs and unresolved issues in congregational leaders can greatly improve effectiveness in their roles as leaders.

Taken together, nearly all the participants in the pretest and posttest provided responses that varied between 10% and 20%. This is a reflection of the impact of the intermediary session aimed at drawing the possibility of unmet needs and unresolved issues in their lives. The purpose of the questions was to help highlight aspects of the participants' lives that may have been significantly impacted by internalized unresolved issues and unmet needs. Hence, the variations between the pretest results and posttest results are indicative of the fact that when attention is drawn to deeply-rooted emotional and psychological blockages, they ultimately unveil underlying unmet needs and unresolved issues. The project also made clear that if the project was executed on a larger scale, with more diversity and over a longer period of time, the results would make this claim even more vividly measurable.

Such amplification would further buttress the project's initial hypothetical position that bringing awareness to unmet needs and unresolved issues can help congregational leaders become more effective in the discharge of their duties. It is worth noting that the pretest and posttest changes could have been even more pronounced if the participants were not somewhat familiar. This implies that the tests would have produced more profound changes in the pretest and posttest results if it was conducted in a completely neutral setting and the participants are relatively unknown to one another. Under such circumstances, the usual personal inhibitions arising from perceived privacy concerns would be minimized thereby making participants more honest with their true feelings. A recommendation to mitigate those issues would be to involve an outsider to do the work of interviewer and if possible, presenter. When trying to replicate this project within a faith base setting, it is suggested that the process starts with leaders. Unmet needs and unresolved issues are emotional entities which by nature are often layers deep in peoples' unconsciousness; and in therapeutic practice it takes time and effort to unveil. Hence, an ideal test environment that takes these factors into consideration would yield significantly better results.

In light of all the outcomes and observations from this project, perhaps the most important personal discovery I made was that I had unresolved issues with several leaders and now I feel better equipped to deal with those issues. This song sung by Whitney Houston but written by Diane Warren summed it up for me:

*I Didn't Know My Own Strength*

*Lost touch with my soul*

*I had no where to turn*

*I had no where to go*

*Lost sight of my dream,*

*Thought it would be the end of me*

*I thought I'd never make it through*

*I had no hope to hold on to,*

*I thought I would break*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*And I crashed down, and I tumbled*

*But I did not crumble*

*I got through all the pain*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*Survived my darkest hour*

*My faith kept me alive*

*I picked myself back up*

*Hold my head up high*

*I was not built to break*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*Found hope in my heart,*

*I found the light to life*

*My way out the dark*

*Found all that I need*

*Here inside of me*

*I thought I'd never find my way*

*I thought I'd never lift that weight*

*I thought I would break*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*And I crashed down, and I tumbled*

*But I did not crumble*

*I got through all the pain*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*Survived my darkest hour*

*My faith kept me alive*

*I picked myself back up*

*Hold my head up high*

*I was not built to break*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*There were so many times I*

*Wondered how I'd get through the night I*

*Thought took all I could take*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*And I crashed down, and I tumbled*

*But I did not crumble*

*I got through all the pain*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*Survived my darkest hour*

*My faith kept me alive*

*I picked myself back up*

*Hold my head up high*

*I was not built to break*

*I didn't know my own strength*

*I was not built to break*

*I got to know my own strength*

## **APPENDIX A**

### **PRE AND POST SURVEY QUESTIONS**

### **Pre and Post Survey Questions**

#### **Unmet Needs Survey Questions**

Please respond to each question by checking the appropriate box:

1. Have you ever experienced trauma?  
Yes    No
2. Did you feel protected as a child?  
Yes    No
3. Is it important that people accept me for who I am?  
Yes    No
4. Is it important to be seen as an individual?  
Yes    No
5. Is it significant that others rely on you?  
Yes    No
6. Do you feel that those close to you are there for you?  
Yes    No
7. Is it significant to feel needed by those close to me?  
Yes    No
8. Is it vital to feel independent?  
Yes    No
9. Is it important to be appreciated by others?  
Yes    No
10. Did you have issues with trusting adults (authority) as a child?  
Yes    No
11. Is it significant to feel needed by those close to me?  
Yes    No

#### **Unresolved Issues Survey Questions**

Please respond to each question by checking the appropriate box:

1. Do you have difficulty concentrating?



Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure

2. Do you feel jumpy or easily startled?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
3. Do you have physical reactions such as sweating, increased heart rate or trouble breathing when you are reminded of a stressful experience from the past?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
4. Do you avoid thinking or talking about a stressful experience from the past or avoid having feelings related to it?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
5. Do you avoid activities, places and people because they remind you of a stressful experience from the past?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
6. Do you have trouble remembering important parts of a stressful experience from the past?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
7. Do you feel emotionally numb or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
8. Do you feel irritable or having angry outbursts?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
9. Do you have repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or images of a stressful experience from the past?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
10. Are you “super alert” or watchful on guard?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure
11. Do you feel very upset when something reminds you of a stressful experience from the past?  
Not at all      Moderately      Extremely      Not Sure

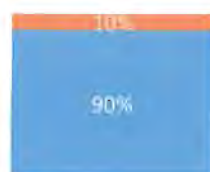
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**APPENDIX B**  
**SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS**

## Unresolved Issues Data Analysis

### SAFETY

■ Yes ■ No



PRETEST

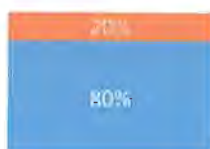


POST TEST

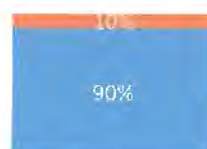
DID YOU FEEL PROTECTED AS A CHILD?

### ACCEPTANCE

■ Yes ■ No



PRETEST

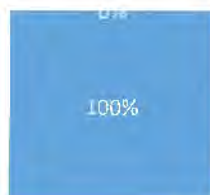


POSTTEST

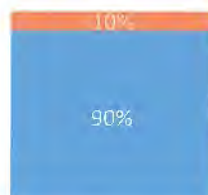
IS IT IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE ACCEPT ME FOR WHO I AM?

### RESPECTED/VALUED

■ Yes ■ No



PRETEST

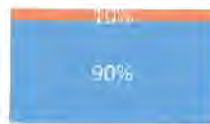


POSTTEST

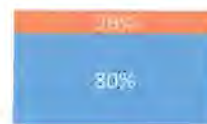
IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE SEEN AS AN INDIVIDUAL?

## SENSE OF SECURITY

■ Yes ■ No



PRETEST



POSTTEST

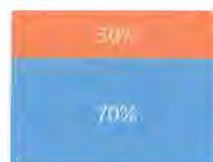
DO YOU FEEL THAT THOSE CLOSE TO YOU ARE THERE FOR YOU?

## CARED ABOUT/SUPPORTED

■ Yes ■ No



PRETEST

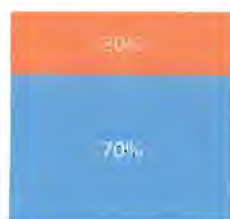


POSTTEST

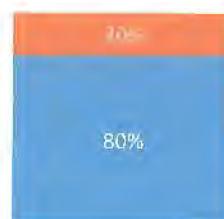
IS IT SIGNIFICANT TO FEEL NEEDED BY THOSE CLOSE TO ME?

## AUTONOMY

■ Yes ■ No



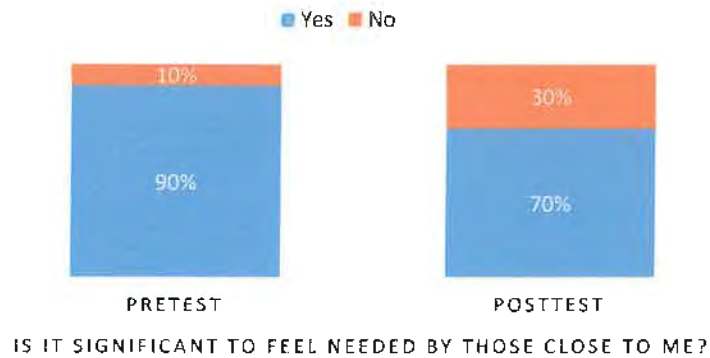
PRETEST



POSTTEST

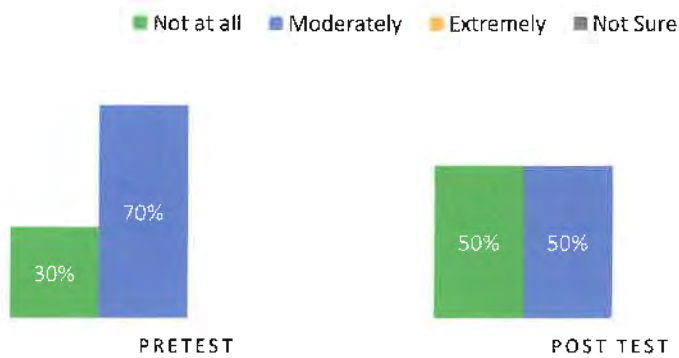
IS IT VITAL TO FEEL INDEPENDENT?

## NEEDED/USEFUL



## Unresolved Issues Data Analysis

### DO YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING?



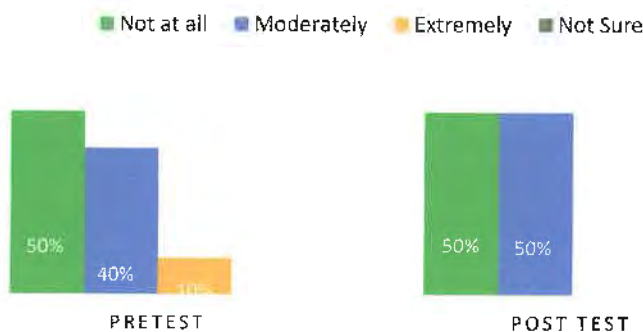
## DO YOU FEEL JUMPY OR EASILY STARTLED?



## DO YOU HAVE PHYSICAL REACTIONS SUCH AS SWEATING, INCREASED HEART RATE OR...

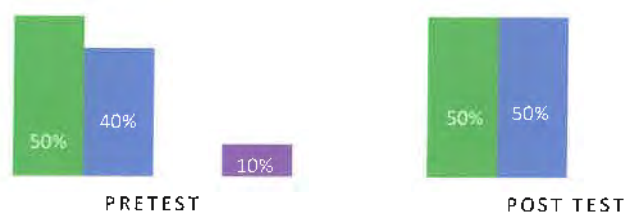


## DO YOU AVOID THINKING OR TALKING ABOUT A STRESSFUL EXPERIENCE FROM THE PAST OR AVOID HAVING FEELINGS RELATED TO IT?



### DO YOU AVOID ACTIVITIES, PLACES AND PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY REMIND YOU OF A STRESSFUL EXPERIENCE FROM THE PAST?

■ Not at all ■ Moderately ■ Extremely ■ Not Sure



### DO YOU HAVE TROUBLE REMEMBERING IMPORTANT PARTS OF A STRESSFUL EXPERIENCE FROM THE PAST?

■ Not at all ■ Moderately ■ Extremely ■ Not Sure



### DO YOU FEEL EMOTIONALLY NUMB OR BEING UNABLE TO HAVE LOVING FEELINGS FOR THOSE CLOSE TO YOU?

■ Not at all ■ Moderately ■ Extremely ■ Not Sure



## DO YOU FEEL IRRITABLE OR HAVING ANGRY OUTBURSTS?

■ Not at all ■ Moderately ■ Extremely ■ Not Sure



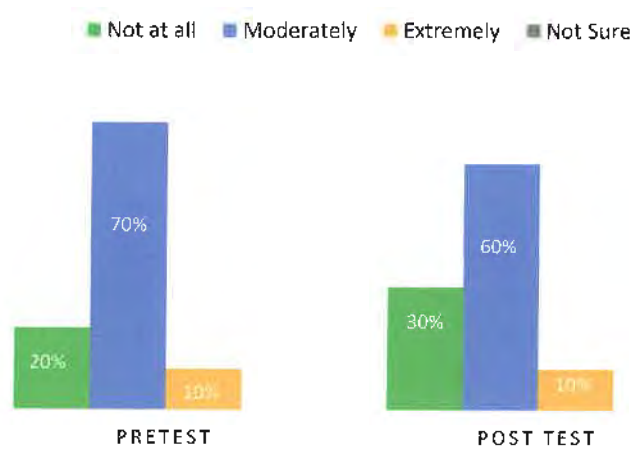
## DO YOU HAVE REPEATED, DISTURBING MEMORIES, THOUGHTS, OR IMAGES OF A STRESSFUL EXPERIENCE FROM THE PAST?

■ Not at all ■ Moderately ■ Extremely ■ Not Sure

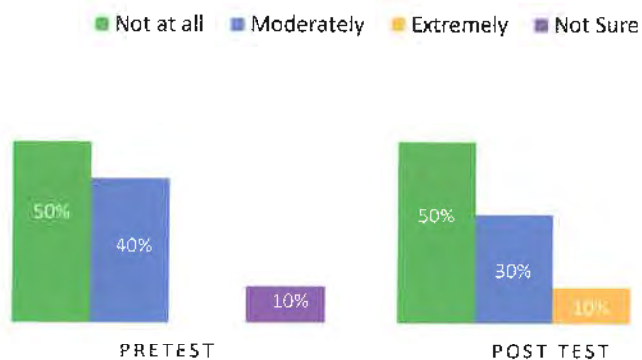




## ARE YOU “SUPER ALERT” OR WATCHFUL ON GUARD?



## DO YOU FEEL VERY UPSET WHEN SOMETHING REMINDS YOU OF A STRESSFUL EXPERIENCE FROM THE PAST?



**APPENDIX C**  
**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

### PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

By signing this form I am stating that I understand and agree to the following information:

**(Please initial next to each item.)**

\_\_\_\_\_ I am 18 years of age or older.

\_\_\_\_\_ My participation in this project is completely voluntary. No financial restitution nor in-kind provisions of any kind will be provided to me for my time involved with this project.

\_\_\_\_\_ My participation in this project is confidential. All information that I am exposed to including information that I divulge is to remain confidential. No information is to be shared or repeated outside of the project participants.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that this project is being conducted at Wholeness International Ministries as a requirement for Edna Jafferalli Doctor of Ministry program for United Theological Seminary. This project is not affiliated with Wholeness International Ministries.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that this project is the sole responsibility of Edna Jafferalli and that the information collected will remain her intellectual property.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware that the results of this project that I'm participating in will be published in the doctoral thesis of Edna Jafferalli upon her successful graduation from United Theological Seminary.

\_\_\_\_\_ I hold harmless Wholeness International Ministries for any misrepresentation or mishap that I may incur as a part of my participation in this project.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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